

Tapping into the Walnut St.

By CYNTHIA WISEHART

to expect? Expect anything.

"They all told lots of jokes — they were fun to be around."

Jane Goldberg speaks with enthusiasm, despite the early hour and an obvious head cold. She drops names like Chuck Green, Honi Coles, Charles "Cookie" Cook, Leslie "Bubba" Gaines, and it is clear that these tap dance greats are not only her teachers, but her creative partners and her pals.

Goldberg, who brings her Changing Times Tap Dance Company to the Walnut Street Theatre this weekend, learned her craft in the classic fashion — "by word of foot" — a tradition of hand-me-downs, of "watch this," "remember that," and "what if we did such-and-such." Although she began as an observer, she quickly graduated to student-teacher-devotee of America's only indigenous dance form — jazz tap.

Learning from the people who have been having such fun with it for decades, she developed not only skill, but a healthy respect for the process, tradition and potential of tap dancing.

When she talks about tap dance, she talks about sound — "aural sense," "playing your feet."

"The emphasis is on rhythm and sound — in a way it is like composing music," she said. But she will also explain that it is about a great deal more — humor, rich tradition, easy virtuosity, and a good time.

The house lights go down. The stage lights stay down. Goldberg's taps are heard in complex, syncopated rhythms. The point is made and *Changing Times Tap Dancing Revue* is off and running. The rest of the evening is a wide variety of dazzling footwork, humor, poetry, old-fashioned tap dance camaraderie, and experimental works.

Goldberg is bringing a lot of friends to the Walnut — "Cookie" and "Bubba," and Jackie Raven, a fellow member of the new tap generation, pianist Jim Roberts, drummer Jim Payne, and her poet-collaborator Stewart Alter. What

So, how did a political science major at Boston University become a tapper? "Well, I had been involved in modern dance and dance criticism for several Boston publications," she explained. "I really loved the Fred and Ginger movies and it was my natural curiosity that led me to try it for myself."

She began her studies at Stanley Brown's studio in Boston. "He was an old vaudevillian and he turned me on to the musicality of tap," she recalled. "I don't know if I would have become as interested if he hadn't been my first teacher. He really got me into it."

More natural curiosity — "and brashness too, I think" — led her to New York where she approached Chuck Green and other great tappers and essentially said, "Teach me some." "I was lucky," she says, "I picked a week to go to New York when there was a lot of exciting stuff going on in tap."

She was fascinated with the history and richness of jazz tap and anxious to educate more people to what it has to offer. "I came back to Boston and I said to Stanley, 'You never told me about all that out there,'" she recalled.

Goldberg's desire to spread the tap gospel has taken her and her company from their New York City base to Jacob's Pillow, the American Dance Festival and now to Philadelphia — "a traditional hot-bed of street corner tappers."

"Changing Times Tap Dancing Revue" will be performed at the Walnut Street Theatre Friday at 8 p.m. and Saturday at 2 & 8 p.m. Tickets are now available at the Walnut box office and student rush tickets will be available 10 minutes prior to each performance.

What does Jane Goldberg want to accomplish as a tap dancer? "A good time for myself and the audience," she answers. "I want to show them that something serious can be fun. I don't want to make tap precious, I want to give it a contemporary context. You know — I just like to dance."



HIGH-STEPPING Jane Goldberg brings her changing times tap dancing revue to the Walnut Street Theatre tonight.