

# DANCE

M A G A Z I N E

Jane Goldberg  
Cooper Union  
December 3, 1992  
Reviewed by Molly McQuade

"For those of you who don't know me, I'm the tap goddess of the Lower East Side, and I'm very happy to be back in my original kingdom." Pause. "But I'm depressed. First of all, my right knee really hurts."

There is almost nothing that downtowner Jane Goldberg won't say in a tap monologue, and what she does say emerges as though she's discovering her thoughts, as well as her steps, as she goes. It's a pleasure to hear and to see this, because Goldberg's scruples are usually at play indirectly, mixing irony with drollery and the political with the purely silly. Her favorite subject is contemporary folly, and her tack is both earthy and flighty. For most of her career as a dancing individualist, she has specialized in stream-of-consciousness caprice—and made it percussive.

In her most recent New York City appearance, Goldberg offered a retrospective, not only of her own work but of tap in this century, and even earlier. Typically modest in her presentation, yet generous in the scope of what she presented, Goldberg mingled favorite scripts, themes, and footwork while all done up in a black-and-white polka-dot skirt, red

bodice with plunging neckline, and frumpily elaborate headdress.

"I can hardly hear myself," she announced, "so I'm going to take off my crown—a Ruth St. Denis original. I'm trying to get even with her and her husband, Ted Shawn, who called tap dancing the scourge of the devil." Her emphatically personal tour of tap included the numbers *The Unhappy Hooper's Hebraic Roots of Calypso*; *The Sixties: Topical Tap*; *I Got an Uncle in Harlem: Tap Daddies and Charles "Cookie" Cook*; and *Sole Sisters*, Goldberg's paean to female hoofers. Dropped into these dancing, singing, and talking routines was a "matzoh tap dance" (invented, we were told, by Bathsheba on the mountaintop) and a brief salute to Goldberg's mother ("She's a percussionist. She knits."), as well as an extensive, giggly slide lecture.

Cooper Union's Great Hall was not ideally suited to the sound or the sense of a freebooting soloist. Columns obstructed the view, and the dancer's body mike failed to convey some speech clearly.

Still, the beauty of Goldberg's tongue-in-cheek looks at her passing obsessions was clear: a weird objectivity possessed her, and she was not as hapless as she sometimes seemed. Even when she complained, comedy came of it, bringing ease, release, and a little bit of wisdom. Goldberg has authority, though she holds it lightly. □



Carol Rosen/Martin Swann Associates

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