

Washington Post

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 1990

Jane Goldberg's Tiptop Tap

By Pamela Sommers
Special to The Washington Post

"I love to talk. I love to tap," declares tap-dancer Jane Goldberg at the start of her "Topical Tap" show. And how. Throughout this beguilingly casual evening of "rhythm and schmooze," performed last night on d.c. space's small wooden stage, this funny, frizzy-haired lady with the rapid-fire feet mixes words and steps to often hilarious effect.

A pioneer of the current tap dance renaissance, Goldberg—a Washington native now residing in New York City—first made her mark as a producer, ferreting out gifted but forgotten hoofers and organizing shows and seminars that made their artistry available to fans both old and new. At the same time she studied under many of these masters, and began putting together intimate revues featuring these fellows plus an assortment of younger tappers, herself included. Like most of her mentors, she began by dancing to jazz music, but gradually developed an inimitable fusion of verbal and pedal rhythms.

"Topical Tap" is her most amusing presentation to date. A kind of rough-hewn autobiography, it affords Goldberg the chance to sound off on politics, therapy,

family, romance and her obsession with tap dancing, with her feet providing yet another layer of commentary. Armed with a whisk and colander, her round little body whirling like some mixmaster gone berserk, she delivers a hilarious rap on "career vs. family." To illustrate her left-leaning politics she offers up a medley of "freedom songs," among them a jazz-tap version of "La Marseillaise," complete with cancan, and a hoof-er's interpretation of "The Hammer Song."

During a tongue-in-cheek history lesson on the roots of tap, she explains that the Jews invented the art form "because they were doing all that running through the desert," and the Jewish women, waiting for Moses to come down from Mount Sinai, developed a particularly insistent rhythm (at this point, Goldberg assumes a bored stance, places her hand on her hip, and taps her foot repeatedly against the floor like some beleaguered customer in line at Hechinger).

Though Goldberg's style is sometimes rambling and not very polished—a good director would come in handy—she is definitely an original. The art of tap dancing needs more trailblazers like this one.