

· **What is Clogging?**

Clogging is a type of dancing of which the three main characteristics are:

- . loud, fast footwork with steel plates or taps on the shoes;
- . fairly rigid torso; and
- . an up and down knee motion (which differs from most other dance forms).

Clogging is continually in a state of change and improvisation by its individual performers, so that today it is performed not only to country and bluegrass music, but to pop, jazz, and rap. Although clogging is performed by each dancer individually, it is often done as precision dancing by a group of people. The dancers do the same steps at the same time as cued by a leader using a sound system. Clogging is often a family affair. All ages from 4 to 84 can and do participate. It is not unusual for three generations of a family to be clogging together. Not only do they keep fit, but they have a wonderful time.

· **How did Clogging Originate?**

This enjoyable, healthy dance form has been around for hundreds of years. It originated in the Appalachian Mountains of the U. S. when the early settlers from Holland, Germany, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Africa combined their dance traditions. They called it buck dancing, flat footing, or just plain dancing. It was usually done to live fiddle music. Clogging and tap dancing have common roots. Clogging became the country cousin of tap. Tap is high impact, while clogging is low.

· **Where did Clogging get its name?**

The term clogging comes from the heavy shoes once worn by the working people of Great Britain. In Holland, Belgium, and France, the dance was done with wooden shoes and today many people still believe that cloggers dance in wooden shoes. In the English steel mills in the mid 18th century, dancing in wooden clogs was a popular pastime. Competitions were held, and they danced on cobblestones with the upper body motionless, while the feet and legs did all the work. Heavy wooden clogs were a hindrance so a switch was made to leather shoes. To compensate for the loss of sound, copper pennies were nailed to the toe and heel. Present day cloggers use an oxford shoe with a special extra loud double steel tap.

· **What is the difference between Clogging, Step Dancing and Tap Dancing?**

Traditional Clogging is a flat foot shuffle unlike any other form of dance and the body motion is down. This is different from Step and Tap as their motion is up and the dance is done on the balls of the feet with much jumping or hopping. Step and Clog are similar in their appearance as they both have little upper body movement. However clogging is generally more relaxed with no requirement for arms at all. Tap uses the entire body with specific arm and body movements.

The differences between these three dance forms are becoming more difficult to define. The younger, more energetic clog dancer does a form of Clog called Buck and this looks very similar to Step and also borrows a lot of steps from Tap. However, in traditional terms clogging is a down motion with a lazy shuffle (thus low impact) and step dancing is an up motion with a lot of jumping (thus high impact).

· **How does the Clogger get started?**

Would-be cloggers usually take a beginner course of 10 to 12 week duration. All the basic clog steps are taught, as well as 5 or 6 actual dances. The beginner starts off slowly, then builds momentum, and at the end of the course is able to dance at a fairly good pace, which is great cardiovascular exercise, and just plain good fun. Workshops provide an

· **What is happening in Present Day Clogging?**

Clogging's growing popularity can be seen by the increased numbers attending workshops conventions and recreation everywhere. In Canada there are over 70 clogging clubs from Prince Edward Island to British Columbia. The U. S. International Clogging Team is made up of cloggers from 17 different countries. In the National Capital Region The Ottawa Valley Cloggers have a large enthusiastic membership.