

## The Sound of Queerness in Tap Dance: Artist's Statement

By Kenny Moody

When I was 10 years old, I had a secret, a forbidden hobby that I couldn't tell anyone about. I often sat in my childhood room, headphones plugged into my 1st edition Macbook, back against the wall and I watched videos of women tap dancing, often in heels.

My eyes were glued to the screen, enamored and entranced by the beautiful shoes tapping gracefully across the floor. This rhythmic symbol of femininity called to me and I wanted nothing more than to answer, but even at 10 years old, I knew that a boy like me shouldn't want those things.

Little did I know, I wasn't a boy at all.

Growing up I never had any language to express my gender identity. Being part of the generation that grew up with the internet, there was not yet a #lgbtq webspace for me to trip into and show me that there was another way. I thought that every boy felt disconnected from the clothes they wear. I thought that every boy saw themselves as a girl in their mind's eye. I thought that every boy lived with this incessant yearning for high heels as well as an agonizing frustration that they were born with the incorrect body to do so. I was wrong.

Because there was nothing that validated my feelings, I spent 20 years of my life living in a state of gendered conflict, but tap dancing always kept me honest.

In 2021, about a year into the pandemic, I realized I was non-binary. I finally learned the spoken language to describe my own experience, and in that realization I recognized tap dancing as the prophetic interest that was guiding me all along.

Tap was the rhythmic language telling me who I was long ago, and I knew that I had to honor my childhood self by finally answering the call, the call to tap dance, the call to be queer.

As I started learning to tap dance, I revisited the hours of videos I had watched and saved out of yearning, and I was not finding people like me who had tap as central to their identity as a queer individual. Where were the lesbian partnered tap dances? Or the cross dressing dancers? There was so much content touching on race and binary genders as it relates to tap, but little that centers Black queer experiences.

My project, The Sound of Queerness in Tap Dance, is meant to provide the queer tap content that I was missing.

Through reading academic essays from professors like Thomas DeFrantz and Sherrie Tucker, I learned that queerness is so much more than pure sexual orientation or gender identity. It is resistance to a constant pull from hegemonic power to naturalize one way of being as the only way, and it is an approach to life that calls naturalized ideologies of race, gender, education, religion, dance, and so much more into question.

Queerness is everything and everywhere all at once, but learning how to see it is the part that I and so many others need guidance for .

Using research of general tap history and online performances, I created the Instagram page @trans\_apparent\_soles to display some of my own queer experiences and ground them in tap dancing. Through my posts and captions, I question and critique the ideas that we take as normal about tap, music, gender, race, religion and more because they all come together to create my queer experience of life.

I hope that by putting this content in an accessible form people like me can find the words to feel validated, seen, and empowered to be themselves in whatever way they choose.

Link to the Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/trans\\_apparent\\_soles/](https://www.instagram.com/trans_apparent_soles/)