

## Never Too Old to Tap? Three Aging Hoofers Decide to Find Out

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The Joyce SoHo seems like a slightly odd place for “Time Step,” a three-man tap show by the company Parallel Exit, which specializes in works inspired by the films of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. The theater’s black-box space provides a perfectly good setting for the low-tech, straightforward staging of “Time Step,” which completed a four-day run Sunday. But the show itself has a crowd-pleasing, populist quality that could probably fill more commercial spaces and draw broader audiences, most particularly the under-12 demographic.

That’s not to say that “Time Step” is unsophisticated or plays down to its audience. But although all three men (Brent McBeth, Ryan Kasprzak and Derek Roland) are skillful tappers, the essence of the show is the kind of wordless yet lucid physical comedy that offers theatrical communication of the most accessible kind.

“Time Step” tells the tale of three formerly famous, elderly hoofers (the Dapper Tap Trio) who live together in cheerful penury until an eviction notice arrives. They decide to enter a talent competition (“Cash prize!”) and after a few attempts to motivate one another, they resolutely begin a period of training and present their number.

The director, Mark Lonergan, shapes the story, silent-movie fashion, through a series of succinct vignettes. The men are first seen in their heyday, each tapping briefly in a spotlight as “1948” is projected on a screen behind them. Then the numbers whir to 2008 and the men are seated, dressed in caps and cardigans, walker and canes at hand.

Their morning habits (drinking coffee, eating cereal, doing a crossword) turn into an ingeniously percussive routine. (Who knew that a cereal box could produce such excellent backup rhythms?) By the time they have confronted bills and discovered the talent-competition notice, we have a good sense of their individual personalities (weepy, resolute, the maverick).

It’s a tribute to the fine acting and physical characterization that each man provides that when another flashback to 1948 offers a vaudevillelike tap routine, we have a genuine sense of seeing the years fall away. Mr. McBeth, Mr. Kasprzak and Mr. Roland (who are credited with the show’s choreography) manage to make their elderly selves funnier and more interesting than the young Dapper Tap Trio, and by the end we care about their fate, which isn’t quite what we might have imagined.

Mr. Lonergan manages this all with dexterous timing, a light touch and minimal stage effects. It’s a reminder of how eloquently the body can speak and of how little it takes to create entertainment.



*From left, Ryan Kasprzak, Derek Roland and Brent McBeth in “Time Step,” in which they play aging tap dancers who try to recapture their glory days.*