



Feb. 15, 2006
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'Tap Dogs' Coming to Performing Arts Center March 5

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Part theatre, part dance, part rock concert, part party, part construction site – "Tap Dogs" is a rough, tough and rocking reinvention of tap that the San Francisco Chronicle calls "sexy, fast, and fabulous!"

Take a group of performers from Australia, the United States, and Canada, add two-time Olivier Award-winning choreographer/creator Dein Perry, eclectic designer/director Nigel Triffitt, and composer Andrew Wilkie, and you get "Tap Dogs" returning to the Christopher Cohan Center on Tuesday, March 7 at 8 p.m.

Cal Poly Arts presents the encore engagement of precision and passion; the 1999 two-night Cohan Center booking played to sold-out San Luis Obispo audiences.

Australian Dein Perry has come a long way from the make-shift dance school in Newcastle -- a steel town north of Sydney, where as young boys, he and the future "dogs" learned how to tap.

At the age of 17, with no opportunities in sight for a dancing career, Perry earned his union papers and worked as an industrial machinist for six years. He then moved to Sydney where he tried to break into show business.

Small chorus parts in Broadway-style musicals led to Perry's big break when he was cast in the long-running Sydney production of "42nd Street."

When it closed, Perry decided to create a contemporary show around the themes of his industrial experience with his Newcastle tap-dancing mates.

With a small government grant, Perry contacted his old friends and formed "Tap Brothers," an early incarnation of "Tap Dogs." From this, Perry was offered the chance to choreograph the West End musical, "Hot Shoe Shuffle," which brought the group to London and earned Perry his Olivier Award in 1995.

A subsequent offer from the Sydney Theatre Company led to the collaboration with designer and director Triffitt, which resulted in the creation of "Tap Dogs."

"Tap Dogs" was the instant hit of the Sydney Theatre Festival during its world premiere in January 1995, and caused an equal sensation at the Edinburgh Festival later that year. "Tap Dogs" then played to standing room only at London's Sadler's Wells, with return tours of Australia, and a second West End engagement.

"Tap Dogs" made their North American debut at Montreal's "Just For Laughs" festival in August 1996. The show then played to critical acclaim on a limited North American tour prior to an engagement in New York City, where Dein Perry earned a 1997 Drama Desk nomination for "Best Choreography" and the show received a 1997 Obie Award.

Since its debut, "Tap Dogs" has toured extensively throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and the Far East. Most recently, the show celebrated its Tenth Anniversary with tours of Australia, Germany, South Africa and the UK.

Tickets for the performance range from \$46 - \$58, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088. Order on-line at www.pacslo.org.

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