

Meghan: [dramatically] Podcast opening. It was a dark and stormy night – [laughing] no. Ok. Um, this is our – [cut off by fake fanfare noise from Murlin] [laughing] This is our third episode of... An Incomplete History of Dance! Did I briefly forget my own podcast title? Yes, yes I did. Um, today we're finally moving away from ballet and getting into tap dance, which is really exciting, 'cause I really like tap and I also don't know a whole lot about the history of tap, so it's fun for me to learn things. Um...

Murlin: I hope you did some research.

Meghan: [sarcastically] No, I just – I decided to make some stuff up – [exasperated] yes, I did research.

Murlin: Oh, ok.

Meghan: That's part of why these take a month to do!

Murlin: Oh, well, ok 'cause I was afraid you were just gonna make it up like, you know, a Donald Trump press conference.

Meghan: Ew, why would you bring that name into our space? That was mean of you. God, no. All right. So, um, yeah. Today is kind of a – biographical – I almost said autobiographical, that's not the correct word... Today is a regular biographical [laughing] episode, um, about a woman named Jeni LeGon. Um, she was big on vaudeville circuits and movies back in the sort of heyday of tap, um... 1930s, 1940s. Um, and, you know, she had a lengthy career after that as well, but most of what she's famous for is her movie work. For instance, she is the only Black woman, and only adult woman I believe, to partner Bill "Bojangles" Robinson in film. Um, it's literally like her and Shirley Temple who partnered him, in terms of women who worked with him. So that's cool. Um, and that was in the 1935 film, *Hooray for Love*, which we'll get back to later. Um, she was one of the rare, like female tap soloists. A lot of female tappers were, you know, chorus line... They did a lot of really, um, impressive work, but they didn't get the same sort of singular recognition as often as male tap dancers would. Uh... rare female tap soloist, even rarer that she was a woman, and a Black woman, who was doing tap solos in film. Um, and she wore pants to tap often enough that it was like her signature costume, which was really cool. Because again, this was the 1930s and '40s. Pants aren't really common for women.

Also she's just a really, really good tap dancer, like, in addition to all her amazing technical prowess she included the flash work that mostly was, again, male tap dancers would do it – you know, like the splits and the flips and the toe stands and things... Um. There's this one clip of, like, the Nicholas Brothers from *stormy Weather* that I feel like every tap teacher ever shows their students. Um, and if – if you've seen that clip, that's – that impressive stuff is the kind of work that she did as a tap dancer. Um, she didn't make it to a – like, huge level of fame or recognition, uh, in terms of her film work because [sing-song voice] Hollywood is racist. Um, but she's super cool. Is that a hand? Are you rai – are you raising your hand at me? Ok. You just stretching?

Murlin: Just... doing things. Yeah.

Meghan: Ok. I mean, you know, stop me or ask me questions or talk to me at any point. I'm just – I'm just gushing about a really cool tap dancer.

Murlin: As – as soon as I'm inspired, you will hear from me.

Meghan: Thanks. I appreciate that. It's a good – good commitment. But yeah, she's... just very, very cool. Actual! Information! So, Jeni LeGon is born in 1916 as Jennie May Ligon – that's spelled

differently, um – J-e-n-n-i-e, May as in the month, L-i-g-o-n. And her last name, and first name I guess slightly, got misspelled by a gossip columnist, um, and it stuck. [laughing] And she was born in Chicago, raised near the South Side. Um, there's this story she recalls in a couple of sources I found, how she grew up, um, kids in her neighbourhood – in her family and in her neighbourhood, would like put on plays where the porch steps were where the audience would sit and the sidewalk was the stage. And they'd play music, and they'd sing and dance for each other, and... like, she called them theatre gangs? And said that new kids would have to audition to get in. Um, [laughing] so like if you weren't good enough you didn't make it in, you know? Um... But yeah, there's this... In one interview she recalled being seven years old and seeing this Christmas show, where a bunch of little girls were dancing, and like standing up and shouting that she was gonna do that too. Um, which is a whole mood, and very cute, and I like that story a lot. [laughing]

Um... She, as a tap dancer she learned in large part, um... by going to movies, and then, in the 1920s, you know, they had movies play, and then they'd have a stage show afterwards. Bands would come, sometimes with dance groups, and then the movies would run again after that stage show in the middle. And so, when the movies ran the second time she'd go out into the lobby and practice all the steps that she saw from the dancers onstage. Um, and that was how she learned to dance! Which is really cool, that's... pretty common, um, in... not just tap but like, jazz, and later hip-hop, like that's – I don't know, just the idea of... you learn steps just by seeing somebody do something, thinking "oh that's cool," and then putting your own spin on it. Um... that's kind of how tap, in its heyday, was, um... sort of put out into the world and given to people. Um... I just – the – the community concept of it all. The idea that you are in conversation with your teachers. And with the people that maybe you never even speak to but you see them onstage and they inspire you, and maybe you go onstage and they see you, and you inspire them.

More on – more on how she learned to tap later 'cause that's gonna come back, but um. She had this sort of... second-hand connection with a lot of Chicago-area tap dancers and the people who would come through because she would see them, and she would learn from them, even if, you know, they never necessarily spoke. Um... so yeah. She'd play with these routines, add her own spin on the – her favourite steps to make them cooler or more fun for her or whatever. Um, but she would literally memorise, um, these professional tap dancers' routines. And that's as a young kid, too.

Um, in... when she was about thirteen, her brother auditions for this Christmas show at a movie house. Um, and he gets the job, he comes home, he tells her "oh hey! They're also auditioning for a chorus line." Um, that is a chorus line as in, lowercase letters, not the musical which did not exist yet, just to be clear in case there's anyone out there who just got really confused. [laughing] Anyway, she auditions for just [with exaggerated pronunciation] your average chorus line. In a Christmas show. Um, she gets the job 'cause she's so good, and then when she tries on the costume it doesn't fit because she was very, very skinny and flat-chested. And, so, they're like "we can't put you in this dress!" And she was like "well, I don't... dance in dresses! I dance in pants!" Which at the time was not a true statement. Um, like I said she did dance in pants as an adult tapper. But this was the start of that and that had never really happened to her before. She just kinda said it in the hopes that it would, you know, let her have the job still. So, the director goes "Oh, great, uh, now you're not in the line, you're the *soubrette*." Which is this like, young girl who's featured in the front of the chorus line, uh, she gets to kinda ham it up, stand out more than most people. So, the pants kind of fit 'cause you've got your own individual thing going on. And after that pants just kinda stayed. It was her thing, these long, swooshy pants.

Um, she keeps getting pretty good spots on chorus lines, she performs for Count Basie in Chicago, um, and then she auditions for the Whitman Sisters, who are a really big deal on the vaudeville circuit. Um... and while waiting for that audition she sees the Four Step Brothers, also a pretty big deal, rehearsing. And she asks to watch and they say yes 'cause why not? This is just – you know. It's... a tap dancer who wants to see a tap dance, and... solid community. Um, and they're doing one of the routines that she learned by watching them perform in between movies. Um... So, as they're working on changing up this one step in particular that she had really liked, and had personally added something to, to make it more fun for herself – she suggests doing her version of the step and then shows it to them. And then they were like, "oh dang! You're a really good dancer!" So they go with her to her audition, she says, and like, vouched for her to the director, um, for the Whitman sisters audition, like... "Don't even worry about auditioning her, she's super great; this kid can tap dance really well, you want her on your show." Um, which is... amazing.

I'm just curious, Dad, do any of these names – I know this is before your time, I'm not like "Oh, you're super old so you know this!" But like, do any of these names ring a bell to you, or...

Murlin: Not a bit.

Meghan: Ok. Cool. I mean – I mean, you probably recognised, like... when I said Bill Robinson, right?

Murlin: Not... exactly, no.

Meghan: Oh. Ok. Well, he was the dude who tap-danced with Shirley Temple a couple of times, usually as her, like, family servant and sometimes slave because this is Hollywood and they really like to do that to Black people.

Murlin: I also, um, don't believe I've ever watched anything of Shirley Temple's.

Meghan: That's fair. Huh. Anyway, he's like a really famous tap dancer and Jeni LeGon tapped with him, hence why he came up. Anyway! We'll get back to that. Wow! Ok. So, uh, the Whitman Sisters were this group of four Black women – like I said, big on the vaudeville circuit – May, Effie, Alberta and Alice. Al-burr-ta? Al-bear-ta? I don't know. One of those. She went by Bert, 'cause she was a male impersonator. Anyway, Alice was known for being one of the best tappers out there, and these women would find a lot of talent. They hired a lot of other Black artists who then went on to have really notable careers of their own. Um, you know, they – from the sound of it they made it their business to uplift new performers and kind of show them the ropes in show business. And that's what they did for Jeni LeGon. Um... she split from them after like six months or so; she and her sister did some work, first in Chicago where they're from, and then in California, and that's where Jeni LeGon gets discovered by filmmakers. As you can imagine 'cause that's where they're all at, over in California.

So she'd stop the show with all her, like, flashy footwork – um, you know, her splits and knee drops and things – and especially because she, this is a woman doing this everyone's like "Whoa, whaaat?" So, RKO Pictures is a movie studio at the time. They had somebody in the audience at one of these California shows I guess, and that person goes, "Oh, hey, this woman could dance with Bill Robinson," who they'd just signed for the movie *Hooray for Love*. Um, quick – quick note, that movie came out in 1935, and Jeni LeGon was born in 1916. She was nineteen when the movie came out, if it was late in the year. Nineteen! And partnering this guy who's like one of the biggest names in tap at the time. [impressed squeaky noises] She's so good! I can't convey how good her tap dancing is in a podcasting context, but like – let me give you the social context of her casting in a movie at this time, so you can know! That's how good she was! Um. And then, she had a pretty lengthy list of

movies that she worked on in addition to *Hooray for Love*. Um, she was the first Black entertainer to sign a long contract with a Hollywood film studio. It didn't quite pan out the way it was supposed to because racism, but she got a lot of good movies in. Um, there was *Ali Baba Goes to Town* [laughing], which, um... if you, like, casually look up Jeni LeGon's name you'll probably get a lot of reviews for this one novel that came out relatively recently, and which actually mentions her solo in that movie. Um, just a fun random fact that kept annoying me when I was trying to research for this. [laughing] Um... and she was in a movie called *Hi-De-Ho* in 1947, she had a part in *Stormy Weather*, she had a part in *Easter Parade*, with um, I think it's Fred Astaire and Judy Garland who are in that one. Um, and in many of these movies, usually not so much the ones that were predominantly Black-led, but the ones with white leads, she played a maid. 'Cause Hollywood's racist! [forced laugh] Um, there's this thing mentioned in her obituary, um, around the time she was working on *Hooray for Love*, mid-1930s, she and Fred Astaire shared rehearsal space. Um, you know, they'd see each other fairly often. And... in *Easter Parade*, in the nineteen – late 1940s, um... she said that he refused to acknowledge her, and she was very angry about that for a while, according to her obituary. Um, like they were working on the same movie, and he apparently just didn't – act like he knew her, maybe even didn't speak to her, like...

Um. Yeah. That's the kind of thing that was sort of rampant in these tap circles, because white and Black tap dancers, they'd learned from each other, they'd be like "oh yeah, so-and-so does this thing." Um, you know – "I saw them in this" and they would – there's a lot of respect for, if you're a good dancer, you're a good dancer. But, because of the rampant racism in Hollywood, there's also the fact that these white tap dancers would not – almost never reach out to a Black tap dancer. Even in the same studio. Um, she... in one interview that I found, she noted specifically, like, um. There were only – there was only this one couple that ever, like, invited her over. Um, Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler. And other than that, she's like, that wasn't the time, you know. People didn't talk to us if they didn't have to. So... There's – yeah. There – even the ones where it's not her playing a maid, it's got – like the scenes will have blatant roots in minstrelsy.

Um, the one movie I mentioned, *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, it's actually the performance out of her film appearances – that I've actually managed to see, it's the one I like the best in terms of her, like, the sheer tap prowess and performance quality she shows? And it's incredibly racist. It – It's literally part of the plot, is this – white guy is in blackface at that part. She's wearing a goddamn grass skirt! And it's... ugh. It's really, really bad. Um, so much racist caricature in that one scene, and that's the good tap dancing part of it! Her iconic, um, first appearance with Bill Robinson, too – um, I mean, Bill Robinson's pretty much every appearance, there's echoes of minstrelsy in the way that, especially Black *male* performers had to hold their faces and their bodies, just to sort of create this appropriate-for-white-consumption aesthetic. Um, and... [sigh]

I bring this up because it's important – the history of tap comes very, very much out of the history of vaudeville, which is very, very much a history of the minstrel show. Like that's – that's, that's sort of a backwards evolution of terms and what was happening in performance, and... it sucks? That there are so many really good Black dancers out there whose amazing careers are really difficult to discuss without getting into the ways that they were screwed over by their bosses. And that's my soap box, for now. But yeah. Lots of – lots of racism in her film career, unfortunately. That's – and that's most of what's survived in terms of clips of her dancing, because most of the rest of her work was stage work, and that doesn't get filmed in the same way, it doesn't get distributed. So... Yeah. She, she talked about it, um, in various interviews, different details and things, which is how I know, um... some of the stuff I've talked about here. But, also, there's only so many places that will give – let you give a voice to that kind of protest. Um, it's a shame. Um, so that's kind of her Hollywood career.

Um, there were a couple of times where the racism could take a backseat. Um, her first premiere, *Hooray for Love*, she remembers that afterwards people congratulated her regardless of race, like kissing and hugging and asking for autographs! That other word. Um, like, she was really, really shocked by it, um, and like I said there was, you know, Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler who did – they were white movie personalities and tappers and they did invite her and other Black performers to their house, but apart from that, like... [tongue click] not a lot. Um, but she had quite the community built up with other Black performers. She was really close with Fats Waller – please tell me you know that name, Dad.

Murlin: It's... familiar, but I'm not sure why.

Meghan: Um, jazz musician.

Murlin: Ok.

Meghan: Yeah, um. He – he was in *Hooray for Love*, she worked with him on that. Um, and they worked together for four other shows afterwards. Um, and they would rehearse together on their movies, and they had this little act that they put together where he'd play for her and she'd imitate the steps like a little challenge game sort of thing, and then it would end up with them dancing together, um... [laughing] They were really close friends, and in one of the interviews I think she called him, like – she said something like "Fats is my dreamboat" or something like that, like they were just really good friends. Um. I think – yeah, his last score or one of his last scores was for a Broadway musical, um... *Early to Bed*. Yeah, *Early to Bed*. And it was apparently pretty mediocre but it had good choreography and Fats Waller did the music so it was a pretty good vehicle for her. Um, and that was her – her like, big Broadway show time. Um, and that was one of the last things he worked on, um, and she was involved in that, so that's... interesting.

Um, by the early 1940s, she was teaching in California, out of the same building that housed a bookshop that she helped her brother open. There was this club, the Hollywood Canteen, where soldiers in the area could go to hang out, that was supposedly integrated. Um, you know, Black and white soldiers are both allowed. But Black soldiers weren't permitted to dance with white women, um, and Black women weren't about to go there just randomly. So they literally called Jeni LeGon up, and this was something that the – a lot of these canteens would do to say they were integrated, um – like "hey bring your dancers over here so they can dance with the Black dudes that we have, that we don't have girls for," essentially. Um, and... yeah. Um, like I said, pretty common. Uh, she protested but then was like, "you know what, if I and some of these other girls go over there at least the Black soldiers won't be alone in that scenario." Um, so she kind of – she was the kind of person who sort of found her agency by pushing back within the bounds of what people wanted her to do, if that makes sense? Um, like she'd take, "oh you want me to do this? All right, but I'm gonna make this point, and do it this way."

Um, like... in this one article that I found this information in, she recalls dancing with a white man at – on one of these nights, um, because they were both good dancers, and she was like "would you like to dance together?" Because it was easier for, you know, a Black woman to dance with a white man than a Black man to dance with a white woman, because the stereotypes of sexual predation are not there in the same way. 'Cause we have some really messed up ideas in our society about interracial relationships involving Black men. So, that's kind of who she was as a person and what she was doing in the 1940s, um... And in the 1950s, she makes a few television appearances on "Amos 'n' Andy," but most of her work after her initial sort of movie boom was in teaching and stage, um... She did found a touring dance group called Jazz Caribe [pronounced kuh-reeb] or Caribe

[pronounced kuh-ree-bay]. Um, sadly I can't find a lot of information on that... In the late sixties she moved to Canada and stayed there for the rest of her life. Um, she ended up... by the eighties or nineties she ends up teaching not just tap but also jazz, afro-jazz, and ballet. Uh, she was in a jazz band by that same time, eighties – late eighties early nineties, um, and choreographed for local musicals. Um, in 1987 she was inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame. There was even a documentary they filmed about her that sadly I cannot track down because it was paywalled the heck out of, which is so frustrating. Dancers don't have money, and nobody wants to watch a dance documentary but dancers, come on. Come on, people. Yeah, she's been a songwriter, an arranger, she cowrote a play, um... She's – she did like a little bit of everything. Or a lot of everything, in some cases.

In 2012 she died with a long legacy of tap dance and a lot of students who'd learned from her. I don't have, like, a huge major takeaway, um, from here. I think I've talked about most of it: The, um... she had a lot to say about racism in her industry but so few of her words have really survived in a format that's easily accessible; um, her career in film says a lot about the exploitation of Black dancers and the navigation of stereotypes and expectations in order to just get jobs. That's sort of a biographical overview of Jeni LeGon's life. I highly recommend looking up clips, um, in my sources there's a couple of videos that I watched in the process of making this. I mean, most if not all of them come with varying levels of minstrelsy and other harmful stereotypes embedded in them because that's how movies got made. Um, but she was an amazing dancer and sounds like a really cool person. So. You – you got anything? Anything for me? [laughing]

Murlin: No. No, I mean... this is all way before my time.

Meghan: I mean, yeah. I don't know. I don't know, did you ever watch, like, old movies like that and stuff? I know... Marx Brothers, but other than that, or was it just that, or...

Murlin: Uh... no, I mean, like I said I've never watched any Shirley Temple movies...

Meghan: Mm-hm.

Murlin: And, uh, you know, uh... uh, no not really.

Meghan: Yeah. Hm.

Murlin: I mean...

Meghan: I mean, yeah.

Murlin: I remember going to the theatres when I was in junior high and watching Godzilla movies.

Meghan: [laughing]

Murlin: God – I don't think Godzilla tap-danced.

Meghan: No, and I imagine by that point you wouldn't be finding a movie theatre that had the whole shows-in-between-movies thing. [sigh]

Murlin: There was a cartoon.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Double-feature, with a cartoon.

Meghan: Yeah. Did any of the cartoons ever tap dance?

Murlin: [laughing] Who knows. [Meghan laughing] Probably. And, and knowing the time probably in blackface, but you know.

Meghan: Mm, probably, yeah. Cartoons got away with that for a lot longer than people did, and people are still kinda getting away with that a lot of times.

Murlin: Mm-hm.

Meghan: Hmmmm. Anyway, um. [crosstalk] Yeah.

Murlin: [crosstalk] So, I – I – I looked up something while you were talking about – in Wikipedia, and it comes up with this thing: “Prominent modern tap dancers have included” and there’s this list of names.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: So I go through this list of names and I recognise three.

Meghan: Mm-hm.

Murlin: Out of this whole list of names. Savion – Savion Glover.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Gregory Hines.

Meghan: Mm-hm.

Murlin: And Dulé Hill.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Which of course I know from watching [with Meghan] “Psych.”

Meghan: [with Murlin] “Psych.” [laughing] Yeah.

Murlin: Where he tapped in one or two episodes, yeah.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: But he, he wasn’t just a... actor that tapped, he’s known as one of the prominent tap dancers of the modern times.

Meghan: Yep.

Murlin: Which, I wouldn’t have known until I looked at this.

Meghan: Well, you learn something – [laughing]

Murlin: You learn something new every day.

Meghan: [while laughing] Not – not from the lengthy thing that I just said, but from Wikipedia while I was talking.

Murlin: Right, right.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: So, I – I tried looking up some other things. So, you know.

Meghan: Yeah. [crosstalk] Yeah.

Murlin: [crosstalk] Tried looking up Marx Brothers movies where there was tap dancing involved. And, uh...

Meghan: Yep.

Murlin: They – they – they listed like, three of them.

Meghan: Mm-hm.

Murlin: *Day at the Races, Cocoanuts, and Go West.*

Meghan: Been forever since I watched any of the dance scenes in those.

Murlin: Yep, and then – then I came to one where it's the "Five Most Memorable Tap Dancing Scenes in Movies."

Meghan: Oooh! Now I'm curious.

Murlin: Number five is *Billy Elliot*.

Meghan: Yes, ok.

Murlin: Which is a movie I haven't seen.

Meghan: I haven't seen it either.

Murlin: Just heard about, and you knew somebody who – whose brother played the role onstage, right?

Meghan: Yep. Yep, I wonder how they're doing.

Murlin: Don't know. I haven't talked to them.

Meghan: Me neither.

Murlin: And then ano- another one is one I've seen, *Chicago*.

Meghan: Really?

Murlin: Yeah.

Meghan: Huh. I mean... yeah.

Murlin: And, a movie I don't know called *The Artist*, and one I have seen amongst the older movies is *Singin' in the Rain*.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Three white people tap dancing.

Meghan: Yep. That's... interesting. That this is kinda the list –

Murlin: And then number one I have seen and that's the one with Gregory Hines called *White Knights*.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Or, uh...

Meghan: I mean.

Murlin: I forget which Russian ballet dancer tap danced with Gregory Hines.

Meghan: Was that Nureyev?

Murlin: It might be.

Meghan: Yeah, it would've been Nureyev, 'cause he was – he was the dude who, like. Got famous. [awkward laughter followed by sigh] That's really interesting, I'm wondering who compiled that list. 'Cause, like... I mean I guess it depends on if you're talking most famous, [crosstalk] or like –

Murlin: [crosstalk] Well, yeah. I mean it's... it's always somebody's opinion of that, you know.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Um.

Meghan: I feel like there's a difference between saying, "Most Famous Tap Dances," like the ones that have gone down in history because everybody knows about them, versus, like...

Murlin: Yeah.

Meghan: "Here are some really, really good tap dances in movies you need to see because you probably haven't seen them." Like, there's a difference between famous and iconic, I guess. And they can be both. And usually they are and that's why they're famous, but like –

Murlin: Yeah, and – and, and they don't give an author other than the name Tom, so we don't know who actually wrote this other than his first name is Tom.

Meghan: [laugh]

Murlin: Um, and it's on some website I've never visited before, so you know...

Meghan: I would not have stuck *Chicago* on a list of movies with great tap dance scenes. [with Murlin] Um.

Murlin: [with Meghan] Um. It – it has to – let's see.

Meghan: I don't know.

Murlin: It talks about somebody named Billy Flynn.

Meghan: I mean, it's just like... If I – if I think of dance sequences in that movie, tap is not – I'm hard-pressed to even think of, like, a tap dance number in it.

Murlin: Yeah, I don't know – I – I mean, I've seen the movie, but it's a long time ago, and...

Meghan: Yeah. I mean, I'm sure my mind [crosstalk] is blanking, but –

Murlin: [crosstalk] Yeah, it's a scene – it's a scene titled "Tap Dancing Around the Witness" so it has to – I mean, remember –

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: - *Chicago* was like this actually-in-prison kind of thing and...

Meghan: Yeah, and the...

Murlin: And so this, probably playing some sort of lawyer. And...

Meghan: Probably.

Murlin: Yeah.

Meghan: Huh.

Murlin: And of course, I seem to recall there was some tap dancing in the – in the... um, *All That Jazz*, the, uh... Bill Fo- uh, was it Fosse?

Meghan: Oh, yeah, Bob Fosse.

Murlin: Bob Fosse.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Sort of bio – biopic kind of thing.

Meghan: Oh, I'm sure there was. Yeah.

Murlin: And of course, you know, the two guys in *Singin' in the Rain*, they definitely tap danced in other – other movies at other times.

Meghan: Oh, yeah. Um, that's –

Murlin: They – they didn't do a movie without some opportunity for song and dance.

Meghan: Oh, yeah. No, that was – it was, um, Gene Kelly and what's-his-face.

Murlin: Donald O'Connor, I believe.

Meghan: Yeah, Donald O'Connor. For some reason I mixed him up with Danny Kaye, but no, Donald O'Connor – yeah. Yeah, no, Donald O'Connor was a really big tap dancer, too.

Murlin: Yeah.

Meghan: [sigh] So yeah.

Murlin: Don't know that he tapped much with Francis the Talking Mule.

Meghan: I mean, Francis the Talking Mule probably didn't tap much at all.

Murlin: I can't imagine so, no.

Meghan: No, that – it – I mean. Yeah. You'd at least probably get some good sound [phone ringtone] out of those hooves. [laughing, phone ringtone cuts off] All right. Sounds like you are being...

Murlin: No, another – another phone call from a spoof phone number.

Meghan: Ah, yes, of course. I wonder if I have...

Murlin: So anyway, that – that was what I was doing while I was listening, I was researching, since I had no advance knowledge that we were talking about tap.

Meghan: Sorry! [laughing] I'll – I think I'll – Yeah. I was gonna send you some videos and then I think I forgot. Like a terrible person.

Murlin: Ah.

Meghan: But yeah. But yeah, it's... I think one of my favourite things about researching her is just coming up, like, yes, most of what you first find out is all about her very early career, um, in the movies, but also if you, like, keep digging, you find interviews with her when she was much older, um, and you can find videos of her, like, at showcases and things, um, as an older woman, like... Being celebrated for her work, um, and honoured for her lifetime not just of performing, but of teaching. And I just think that's really cool, um. Like, you don't stop dancing just 'cause you aren't in the same kind of public eye, and that's something that's really important to recognise. She still had a huge impact on tap dance, even after her name stopped being in credits of movies, you know?

Murlin: Mm-hm.

Meghan: Not that I'm biased or anything about how cool teachers are, but teachers are pretty cool. [Murlin laughing] Hair flip. I don't – says the teacher! Um... [laughing] But, yeah. Um, speaking of teachers, I would like to, since we're – it's about time to sign off, I would like to thank my teachers, uh, especially Donald Byrd and Laura Ann Smythe, for giving me the foundation that I have built this particular set of knowledge and skills upon. I would not know anything about dance history, or, like, begin to know – or – begin to know where to begin addressing racism in dance, because oof... um, without their knowledge and tutelage and the work they put in to... helping me learn, so. Thank you to my teachers. Uh, thank you to whoever out there is listening! Um, thank you to Dad for being here and [laughing] um, having a fun little tap dance conversation with me. And... Yeah. It... Feel free to subscribe or follow or insert word here that shows your appreciation for this podcast, because everything is statistics, and also tell people who you think might be interested in dance history. Even people who you don't think might be interested in dance history stuff, because I'm pretty sure most people don't advertise their interest in it, 'cause it's kind of nerdy. I don't know. I don't know. Just – you know. Feel free to gush about this. Um, but yeah.

As always, my sources and a transcript can be found on the website, Varner-arts.com. Um, and... yeah. Any last thoughts for me, Dad?

Murlin: No, I'm fresh out.

Meghan: Ok, well. We'll sign off and let you try and replenish them, then.

Murlin: Thanks!