



TAFFY EPSTEIND AND TAFFY'S DANCEWEAR: A STORY OF ENTREPRENUERSHIP, LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVITY

Looking through the lens and history of
modern-day dancewear

The history of dancewear is interwoven with dance history, creating a symbiotic relationship. Examining this history reveals the extent to which innovations in manufacturing and technology influenced dancewear and sometimes dance itself.

Susan Epstein, 2024

Introduction

I'm going to tell you a story. It isn't fiction, but it's also not a scholarly work with references and footnotes. This is my story as I remember it. It's a story of inspiration, entrepreneurship, leadership and creativity. It's the story of an extraordinary woman and the gifts she gave me and everyone she touched. And I'm telling it through the history of modern-day dancewear.

The history of dancewear is interwoven with the history of dance. By looking at the innovations of manufacturing and technology it's easy to see how those advancements have influenced the development of dancewear. But there is also a relationship between the evolution of dance movements and the innovations of products and shoes.

Much has been written about the influence of dance on women's fashion throughout the centuries. As you watch a dancer in a tutu and see a bride in a flowing gown you can't help but make the connection. But that's just the tip of the iceberg.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the movement and rhythms of dance and the properties of textiles that connects dance and fashion. Fashion designers have been designing dance costumes for eons. But there is also a relationship between the evolution of dance movements and the innovations of products and shoes. Evolution in dance genre, technique and choreography led to innovations in garments and shoes to not only reflect the choreography, but to support the technical needs of the dancers.

I'll tell the story by looking at vintage illustrations from the 50's and 60's, powerful photographs from the 70's and 80's and fashion trends across modern times.

Using storytelling and interviews I'll trace the impact of a hobby that turned into an innovative and thriving business, and the entrepreneurial spirit at its center that influenced the industry, dancers, educators, and studio owners, and me.

And I hope you will see how changes in choreography, the marketplace and society can influence the trajectory of our lives.

"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening." Coco Chanel

"What you wear is how you present yourself to the world, especially today, when human contacts are so quick. Fashion is instant language."
—**Miuccia Prada***

*Granddaughter of Mario Prada founder of Prada in 1913

Dressing dancers from the classroom to the stage. The transformative magic of putting on a costume. The joy of your first pointe shoes. The fun making noise with your tap shoes. Your first tutu. The excitement of graduating from a blue leotard to a black one. Your favorite leotard, what to wear to an audition, the feeling of dancing in flowing fabrics or geometric designs. What we wear helps to dictate how we feel, act and dance. And at the center of it all, for almost 50 years, was an innovative company called Taffy's.

It started as a hobby and inspired an industry

She was a hoofer. He was an aspiring actor producer/director. She worked as a CPA for her uncles' Shamata (garment) business. He sold shoes with his father. These were my parents.



Taffy, my brother Steve, Harvey and me

Taffy (nee Harriett Hermaine Gombossy) and Harvey Epstein. Both of them were children of Jewish immigrants, entrepreneurs from Hungary and Lithuania. His father started a shoe business, her uncles started a garment business. Both my parents inherited the entrepreneurial spirit, which they happily passed on to me.



My paternal grandmother's family.



My maternal grandmother's family



Harvey's father Moe and mother Pearl
My paternal grandparents



Top row: Rosanne, Harriett, Celia
Bottom row: Their parents, my grandparents

After WWII Harvey joined his father selling shoes to retail stores and Taffy kept the books for Majestic Specialties, a wholesale women's clothing business owned by her uncle's. At night Taffy and her sister Celia would sell stockings through the mail. Harvey noticed a growing demand for tap shoes and suggested opening a retail store to sell dance shoes. Taffy was restless and was looking for something

more fun than bookkeeping. With their combined talents and industry connections they created ***Cleveland Dance Footwear***. The year was 1954. They rented a small storefront in downtown Cleveland in a landmarked building called The Old Arcade and opened a store specializing in products for dancers.



138 – the original
Taffy's store

The Old Arcade, an iconic Cleveland landmark, was built in 1890

The early years 1954 - 1959

When I was 4 or 5 I got really good at counting. My mother had opened a dancewear shop and my job on Saturday mornings, after my ballet class, was to take inventory. Rows and rows of rainbow-colored ballet shoes. Butter soft with the wonderful aroma of real leather. I would carefully count them and write down my count. I doubt they were used for anything but to keep me busy. There was one employee, a talented young artist named Rita Becker Ford, nee Kolinski. Also the daughter of Jewish immigrants, Rita was the artist who created most of the drawings for the catalogs, and ads along with the logo, and was a terrific salesperson. When Rita was hired neither Harvey nor Taffy knew she had these talents. Fresh out of high school and during her "job interview" Harvey asked her what she knew about shoes? she answered, "Other than most people wear them, nothing". And she was hired on the

spot. Together Taffy and Rita, and occasionally Harvey ran that first store with none of them knowing anything about dancewear or having worked in retail. "Taffy and I were setting up the store and a whole shelf fell down on us, we had no idea what we were doing, but we laughed all the way." When it came time to create a catalog Rita said she could draw, "and then suddenly, I was up to 2-3 in the morning in my house drawing figures and dressing them in our dancewear." For years, Rita designed many of the recital costumes, bodywear and other products.

Judy Diehl, nee Jaffa, was an acquaintance of Rita's. She was also a dancer. Judy went off to college, but one semester came back to Cleveland. She was looking for a ballet class to continue her training and heard that Rita was working at this new dancewear shop in the Old Arcade. She dropped in for a visit and discovered that on the top floor of the building was a ballet studio run by Marquerite Duncan. Judy started taking regular classes and would often stop in the store before and after class. One time she stopped in and the store was really busy. Taffy, Rita, and Harvey were all with customers and the phone started ringing. Harvey looked at Judy and said, "answer the phone!" and that became Judy's first day at work. Judy came and went for a few years but in the 60's she started working full-time as the Director of Marketing. Mind you, no one really had titles, but that is what Judy did. She was the mastermind behind the creation of the catalogs and advertising throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's.

Taffy was a true entrepreneur and risk taker. With Taffy's encouragement Rita and Judy, with their combined creativeness and talents shaped many of the products, catalogs and marketing for years to come. These were my sisters and role models, and they both remained part of Taffy's until the eventual sale to Capezio in 1989. Taffy's management style was one that encouraged "out of the box" thinking and experimentation. She gave them and eventually me a long leash and allowed us to try out our ideas and spur industry innovations. As Rita said, "Taffy allowed me to use my skills, my artwork, my designing and my selling skills, she gave me the space to explore my creativity." This is the environment I grew up in. It was learning from all 3 of them that allowed me eventually to explore ideas and then implement them. I was able to make my contributions to the industry on my own in the years to come.



Rita in the first store in 1955

Look closely – the 3 large photos in the back are sepia prints from the 1948 movie *The Red Shoes*



One of the Red Shoes posters – used as a cover for the 1958-1962 catalogs

Winsor French

It was always the spring, I thought, hardly the autumn of the year with its steady, dignified tread, that caused people to forget their inhibitions, obey their madder impulses and embark on strange flights of fancy. But you never know, and it would certainly appear that Taffy (Mrs. Harvey) Epstein is having some sort of delayed reaction to something.



FRENCH

Taffy, who is sometimes known as the Marilyn Monroe of Ludlow Rd., owns a little business called the Cleveland Dance Footwear & Costume Co. in the Arcade. She enjoys a brisk trade in ballet slippers, tights and so on. No matter the briskness, however, Taffy decided she should think up some angle that would stop the Arcade traffic in earnest, and right at her own window, naturally. Well so she has.

Yesterday, for instance, Mrs. E. was going happily about her work wearing a raspberry tinted leotard, black tights into which I strongly suspect she had to be poured, and a pair of ballet slippers. Rita Becker, her assistant, also was dressed as for the footlights and may I hasten to add that both of the girls were obviously born to wear clothes of a leotard's revealing nature.

The Arcade traffic, just as Taffy planned it, commenced stopping at her window. Matter of fact businessmen, and they are going to look awfully silly in them, are beginning to buy tights in extraordinary quantities. The most un-

likely people are making detours through the Arcade and altogether you might say that Taffy is developing a new interest in the trappings of ballet.

Stage Another Kind of Fashion Show

Dancing teachers got a preview of the latest recital dance costumes at the Hickory Grill from 3 to 6 this afternoon when the Cleveland Dance Footwear & Costume Co. stages a style show there. Tulle, feathers, sequins and satin will be modeled by local dance students from six to 14. This is the first show of the kind produced here and local instructors and teachers from Columbus and Dearborn, Mich., have made reservation. Rita Becker is the commentator and Mrs. Harvey Epstein, who owns the company is in charge. Taffy Epstein, the former ballet student, has inaugurated a new policy at her Cleveland Dance Footwear store in the Old Arcade—she and her assistant, Rita Becker, wear tights and leotards, which the ballet-minded youngsters, and their mothers, find charming.



LEOTARDS ARE NOT REALLY REQUIRED dress for picture hanging. But Mrs. Harvey Epstein (left) and her assistant, Mrs. Joseph Becker, want it understood that "Taffy's" in The Arcade is a shop for dancers.

Leotards Are Her Line

By BEATRICE VINCENT

Although no reader who sells for a living is going to believe this—there IS a store where the customers never "just look."

It is the Dance Footwear & Costume Co. in the Arcade. But this title appears only on the window and in such unimaginative journals as the telephone book.

All customers, from three-year-olds up, call it "Taffy's"—a tribute to Taffy (Mrs. Harvey) Epstein, the owner.

When a customer visits the gay little shop, he has a definite purchase in mind—ballet tights, taps, a leotard, perhaps something as exotic as a pair of finger cymbals.

If said customer is a subteen, Taffy and her helpers, Miss Judy Jaffa and Mrs. Joseph Becker, keep a sharp eye on expenditures. Mothers are consulted by phone if there is any sign of a juvenile spending spree.

Relaxed Atmosphere

There is a pleasant, relaxed, backstage atmosphere at Taffy's—an atmosphere Taffy is careful to cultivate.

"We want them to feel at home," she

says.

To this end, not only Taffy but her assistants, Rita Becker and Judy Jaffa, sometimes don leotards to work about the shop.

But while informality is encouraged among the young fry, bad manners are not. A little moppet, unaccompanied by mother, is given a firm but gentle curtain lecture on etiquette if she gets out of hand.

"It's fun to watch them grow up," says Taffy, herself the mother of two. "We rejoice with them when they go professional and keep in touch with them."

Costumes for Shakespeare

Out of Taffy's little shop come costumes for all Shakespearean plays given hereabouts and the staff works closely with local theater groups.

When there is a crisis at the Chagrin Valley Little Theater, for instance, the young assistants are happy to rush out to lend a helping hand. They have even ushered and collected tickets in emergencies.

Taffy's children are Susan, 5, who is much interested in dancing, and Steven, 8, who definitely is not.

The family home is at 2891 Ludlow Rd.

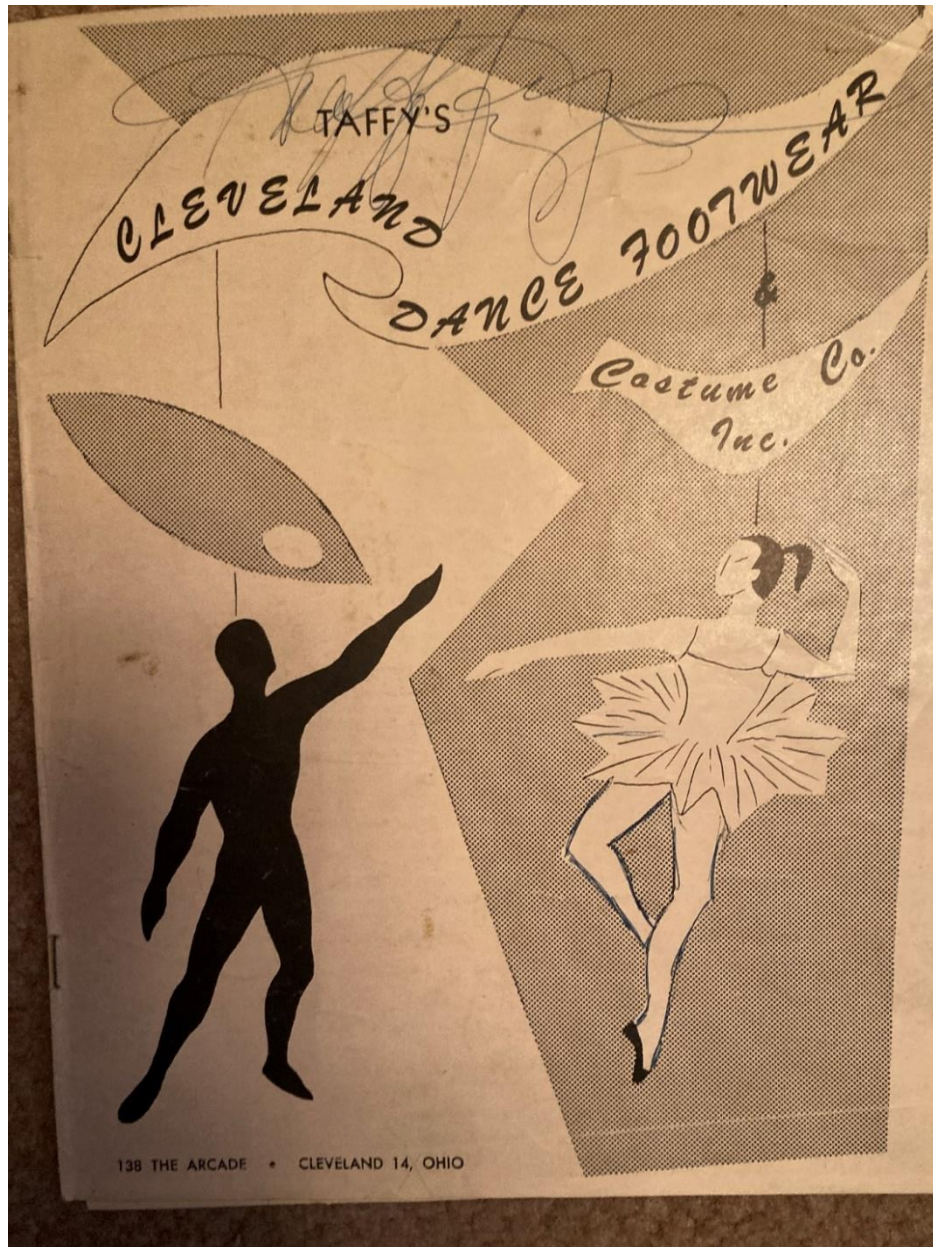
Dance Wear Firm Opens in Cleveland

CLEVELAND, O., Feb. 3. Cleveland Dance Footwear & Costume Co. has opened at 138 Old Arcade, 101 Euclid Avenue, featuring tap, acrobatic, ballet and toe footwear and rehearsal costumes.

The new retail outlet managed and owned by Taffy Epstein, has a modern pink interior, 50x18 feet and black flooring and accessories. Costumes and shoes are displayed in black shadow boxes, showcases, racks and shoe racks. Persimmon colored chairs are used.

Stockroom space covers 30x18 feet, and retail area of the store, 20x18 feet. The front display window is open, and 16 feet wide.

Not only did Cleveland Dance Footwear produce tap dance shoes, but customer demand expanded the offerings to a variety of other dance shoes, and garments dancers would need. One year after the store opened, Taffy put together a small mail-order catalog featuring the products sold in the store.



1955 First mail- order catalog cover.

new yorkers

Ballet

Ballet - Pedics

new yorkers

Revolutionary "lefts" and "rights" hand crafted of mellow garment leather. Pleated toe. M-N widths, 8 1/2 sml - 10 lge.

6563 Black
6583 Pink
6555 Red 3.50

Blk white - 3.00
Pink Blue - 3.25
Red, yellow - 3.50

Selva

Leave in -

CROWN BALLET

Pleated toe, full lined. Teachers choice for students. AA-D widths. 7 sml - 10 lge.

In Stock	1011 Black Kid	3.75
	White Kid	3.75
	Men's Black or White Kid, B-D widths, 4-12 extra	.25
To Order	1011 Red, Pink, Coral, Lavender, Aqua, Royal Blue, Copen Blue, Lime, Yellow, Champagne, Green Kid	3.95
	Silver Kid	5.50
	Gold Kid	6.75
	White, Pink, Black Satin	4.50

Continental's

Hand crafted of Buttersoft glove leather by D. C. Christopherio. THE PROFESSIONAL BALLET SLIPPER. Foot molding, single width. Women's 3-10.

999 Red yellow 4.00
999 Red yellow 4.25
4.50

555 Black
666 White 4.00
888 Lt. Blue 4.25


Theatricals

Fine leather, fully lined, pleated toe. Gore over instep. AA-D widths. 7 sml - 10 lge.

301 Black Kid	3.00
302 White Kid	3.00
303 White Satin	4.00
White Satin ballets dyed to match costumes extra	.75

A page from the first mail-order catalog showing the ballet shoes I so fondly remember counting.


Toe Shoes



Freeds of London

Imported English toe shoes. The choice of Sadler Wells. Overlay kid tip. M-W widths. 12 1/2 sml - 8 1/2 lge.


600 Pink Satin
601 Pink Satin Plain Toe (to order)
602 Pink, Black, White leather (to order) **5.95**



Selva

PRINCESS TOE
Hand crafted, suede tip, pleated toe. Professional grade. B-E widths in stock. A width, to order. 11 sml - 9 lge.

In Stock	1001 Pink Satin Black Satin White Satin	6.50
To Order	Red Satin Royal Blue Satin Gold Satin	6.95




Theatreals

Ben & Sally
Hand turned, suede tip, students choice. B-E widths. 11 sml - 9 lge.

500 Pink Satin
501 Black Satin
502 White Satin **5.95**

6.50



Colorettes

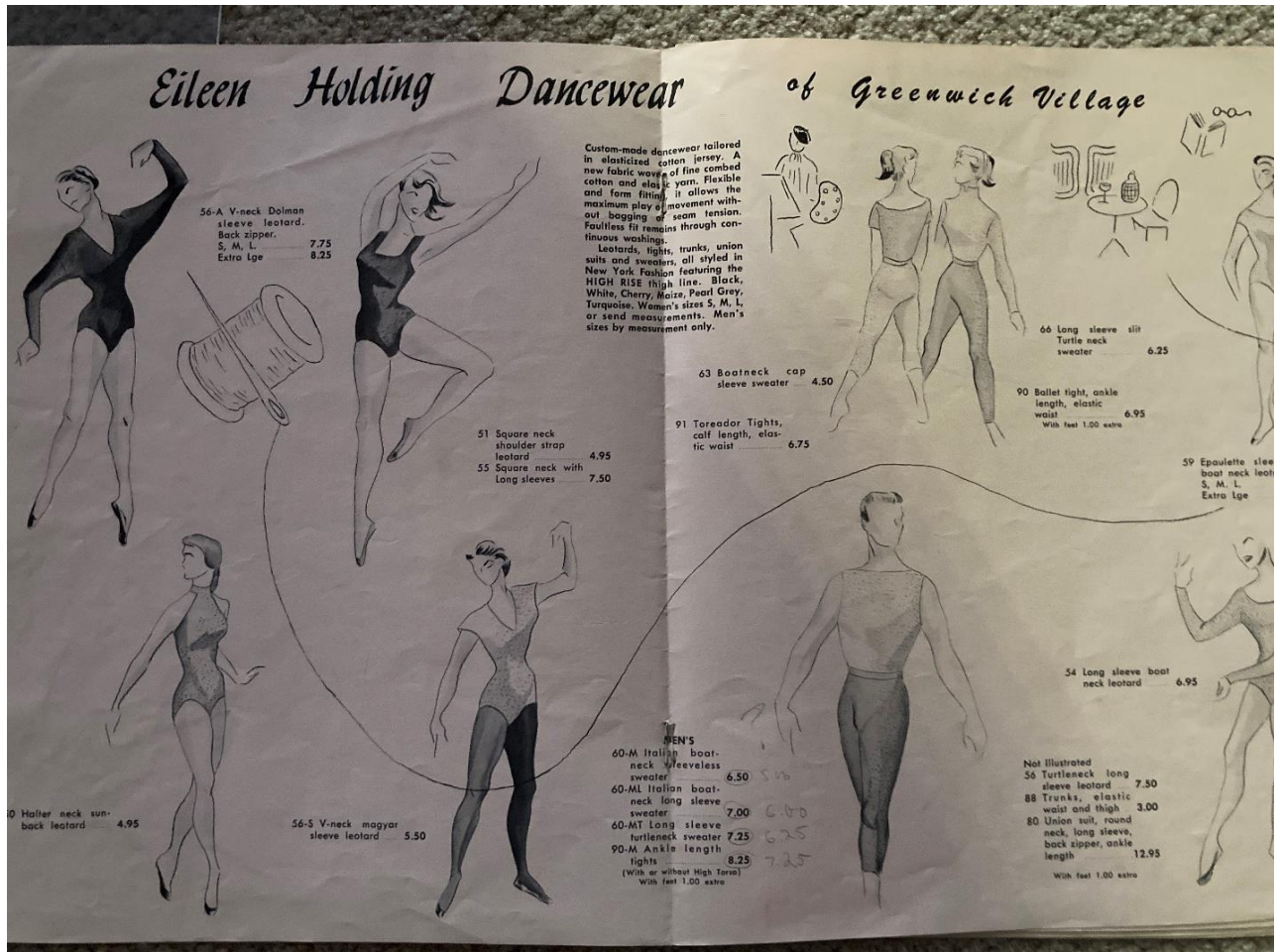
Ingenious new toe shoe cover. Acetate jersey, elastic opening with cut out toe. In Red, Pink, Yellow, Aqua, Purple, White, and Black. State toe shoe size when ordering. **1.00**

Toe Shoe Accessories

RIBBON. 2 1/2-yard hank. 3/8" satin with grograin backing for non-slip. Pink, Black, and White	.25
LAMBSWOOL. 1-oz. box	.75
TOE COVERS. Pink duck with suede soles and tip. State toe shoe size when ordering	1.40
TOE SHOE PADS. State toe shoe size when ordering.	
PAD O' FOAM toe pads	.75
BUNNY FUR toe pads	.85
RUBBER toe pads	3.50

At first it was one store front selling dance shoes, tights, leotards, skirts, taps, whatever was available for dancers of all kinds. We even sold stripper supplies, (The Roxy was just around the corner). I remember using sequin pasties as heel lifts to display our shoes in the windows.

And the customers! Dance teachers, strippers, and young hopefuls getting fitted for their first pointe shoes. Pointe shoes in the 50's were hard as rocks, with suede toes or satin toes that dancers would darn. I don't know how anyone could wear them. Let alone balance in them with those narrow platforms. And there were toe shoes covers, to keep your shoes clean for recital.



The first leotards we sold were made of knitted fabrics that had a lot of give. The garments sort of moved with you. Some had zippers so you could get in and out of them. They sagged and bagged a lot and were really uncomfortable.

Rehearsal Time



2102—CAP SLEEVE BOAT NECK LEOTARD

Child 4-12	3.50
Adult 10-20	3.75
Helanca Nylon To Order	
Only:	
Child	5.95
Adult	6.50

Practice leotards and tights fashioned of 100% knit Durene for perfect fit. All leotards feature elastic legs and invisible Talon zippers. **IN STOCK** in Black, Red, Copen Blue, Royal Blue. **TO ORDER:** Yellow, White, Green, Navy, Pearl Grey, Suntan, Pink, Aqua. T-Shirts and Tights in stock in Black only. Colors to order.



2101—LONG SLEEVE ROUND NECK LEOTARD

Child 2-12	4.50
Adult 10-20	4.50
Helanca Nylon — See "Danskin" Leotards,	
Page 14.	

2100—SHORT SLEEVE ROUND NECK LEOTARD

Child 2-12	3.75
Adult 10-20	3.95
Helanca Nylon — See "Danskin" Leotards,	
Page 14.	

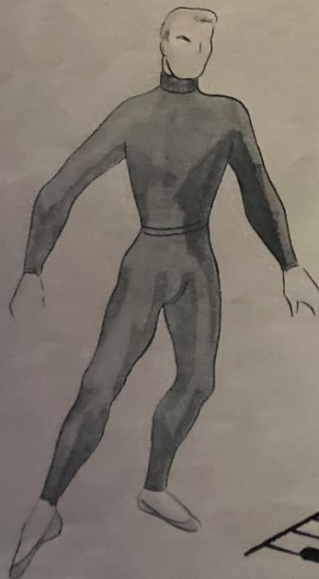


2106—CAP SLEEVE TURTLE NECK LEOTARD

Child 4-12	4.50
Adult 10-20	4.50
Helanca Nylon — To Order only	7.50

2105—LONG SLEEVE TURTLE NECK LEOTARD

Child 4-12	4.95
Adult 10-20	4.95
Helanca Nylon — To Order only	7.95



3100—LONG SLEEVE TURTLE NECK T-SHIRT

Women 10-20	3.95
Men S, M, L	3.95

2500—BALLET TIGHTS

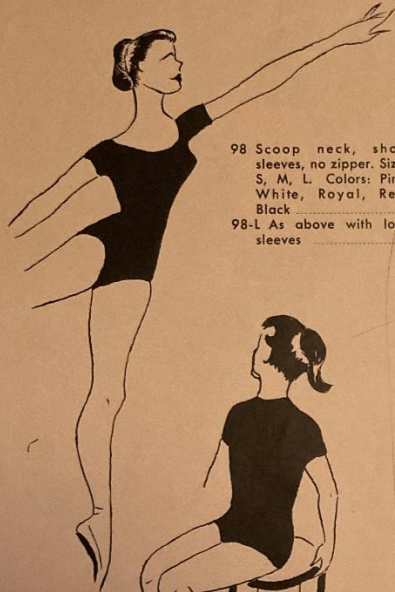
Child 4-14	3.50
Adult 10-20	3.50
TO ORDER: Tights with Feet extra	.50



LEOTARDS

Triumph

TIGHTS



- 98 Scoop neck, short sleeves, no zipper. Sizes S, M, L. Colors: Pink, White, Royal, Red, Black 5.00
98-L As above with long sleeves 6.00

Suntan Open Blue

new Leotard here - Old S, M, L 3.50 Black, White, Royal, Red, Open, Pink

Red, Royal Blue

DANSKIN TIGHTS

Colors: Black, White, Pink, Suntan. Lengths: Average, Long, X-Long.

WOMEN'S	
80 Medium Weight	7.50
32 Non-Run Sheer	7.50
MEN'S	
70 Extra-Heavy Weight	10.00
CHILDREN'S	
60 Tot Size (ages 6-9)	5.00
Teen Size (ages 10-13)	5.00

Move Down

- 97 Women's round neck, short sleeves, back zipper. Sizes S, M, L. Colors: Pink, White, Royal, Red, Black 5.95
97-L As above with long sleeves 6.95
96 Child's, round neck, short sleeve, back zipper. Sizes S, M, L. Colors: Pink, White, Royal, Red, Black 5.00

DANSKIN BRIEFS

Colors: Black, White. Sizes: S, M, L 2.15

NYLON OPERA STOCKINGS

Colors: Black, White, Suntan. Pink. Sizes: 8½-10½.

89 Full fashioned 30 denier, 54 gauge	5.00
200 Seam-free 30 denier, 54 gauge	3.50

Move Down

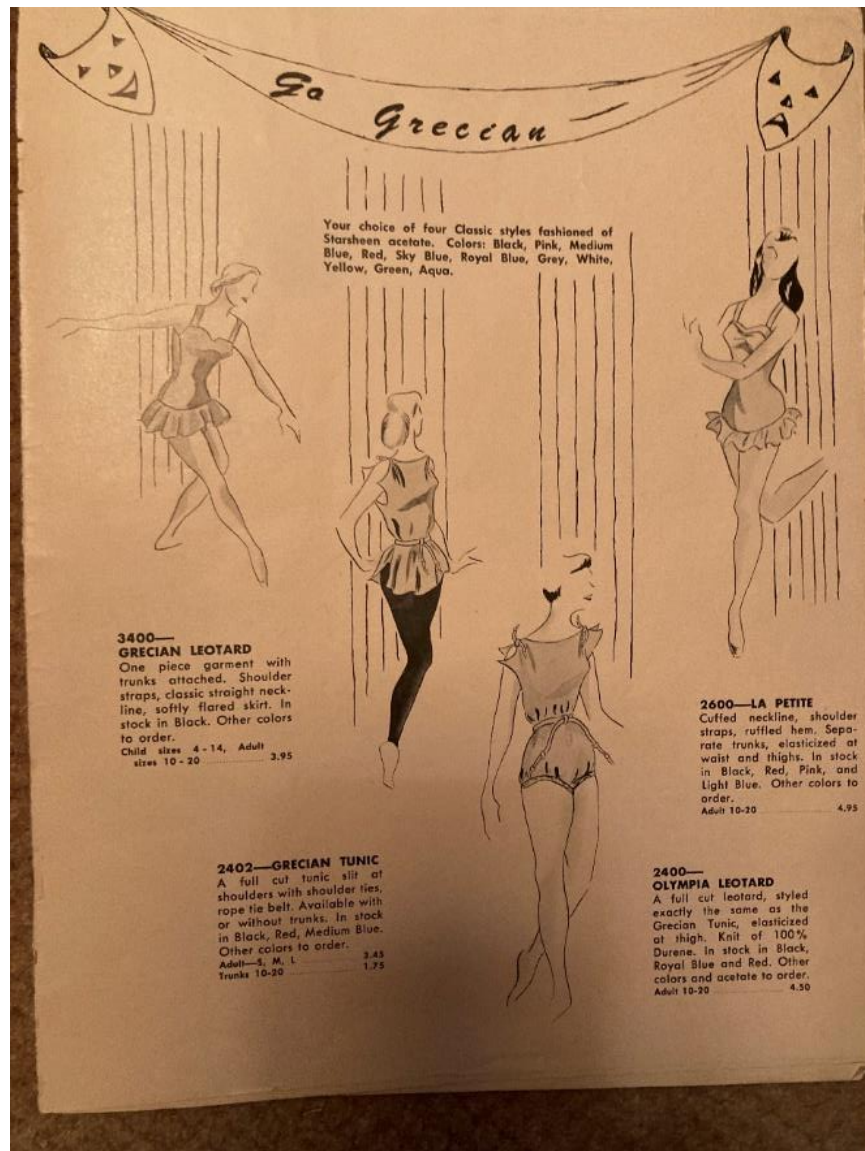
DANSKINS

Tights and leotards by Triumph are completely full fashioned and made of 100% Helanca stretch nylon. They cling to your curves just as closely after many wearings and washings as when new. They are luxuriously soft, wash and dry in a jiffy and never, never wrinkle.

Note: Introduction to Danskin

Somewhere around this time a company called Triumph Hosiery dipped their toes into the dance market with the first 100% Helanca stretch nylon leotards and tights. They named their new brand Danskin. An innovation! No zippers needed on the scoop neck versions, you could step right in. The fabric truly hugged the body. They washed easily and didn't wrinkle, sag or bag. The leotards had to have side seams, and the tights had back seams, as these garments were "cut and sewn" together. This means the fabric came in rolls. They were laid out on a large cutting table and patterns were placed on top to create a template. Then the fronts and backs were cut-out and then sewn together, creating side seams.

Nylon stockings were first introduced by Dupont in 1939 at the New York World's Fair. They were an immediate hit. The manufacturing required a back seam which was considered quite alluring. By 1940 the nylon stockings were all the rage. All that changed in 1942 with the outbreak of WWII. The nylon used in the construction of the stockings was needed for the war. Women, desperate to be fashionable used "leg makeup" to paint the illusion of a back seam on their legs. After the war, around 1955, nylon was again available for fashion hose. Dupont figured out how to dye nylon into vibrant colors and tights became available for dancers. The classic back seam on pink tights became a must for ballet dancers. Some say this helps to define the line of the leg. Today tights are created as tubes and are not shaped to the leg. Tights no longer need a back seam in the manufacturing process, but ballet dancers still required the look of the back seam. Danskin created a pink tight with an artificially sewn on back seam, an updated version of "leg makeup".



There were Grecian tunics too. Draping silky things made from acetate

From the ages of 3- 11 or 12 when I wasn't in school, I was in dance class or at the store in the Old Arcade. But in 1966 when we moved the store to the suburbs. But before that, when the store was still downtown, whenever the Ballet came to town to perform at the Music Hall, the dancers would come to Taffy's to shop. Dancers from Sadlers Wells, The Royal Ballet, the Bolshoi and Moiseyev visited, and browsed and bought. As a kid I had no idea what a rare treat this was, but I'm told that I helped fit Margot Fonteyn with American pointe shoes! And Taffy would entertain the dancers. We would always have a house full of dancers having late night dinners after the performances and railing us with stories.

At the time, now costumes were usually home made by moms and seamstresses in local towns across the country. There weren't very many mail-order dancewear or costume catalogs, and few brick-and-mortar stores. Ready-made costumes were available from a handful of companies whose catalogs were sketches similar to the first Taffy's catalogs. As the sales of costumes grew, and sold in quantities, drawings weren't enough. In 1957 Taffy's sent out a small postcard with 3 costumes photographed. The first-time ready-made costumes were photographed in a retail brochure. There was one for tap for kids (that's me at age 6) one for ballet and a jazz costume for teens.



Note: When customers came to the the Arcade they would ask stop at the information desk and aks where Taffy's was. The name Cleveland Dance Footwear has disappeared. Taffy's was now the brand everyone would recognize.

How did Taffy get her name? Everyone asks me that – here’s the story, as told to me by Taffy. Remember, she was born with the name Harriett. Through the years the story has been repeated many times and in the retelling I am sure there are some exaggerations, but bear with me here. You can blame the whole thing on Milt Caniff and his popular action, adventure comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*. If you don’t know about Terry and the Pirates, it was an immensely popular series that ran from 1934 – 1973. But it was during WWII that the story focused on the war. In fact, in one of the stories a character gives a speech as to the responsibilities of being an officer in the US Army. The speech was so moving and inspirational it was read on the floor of the US Congress.

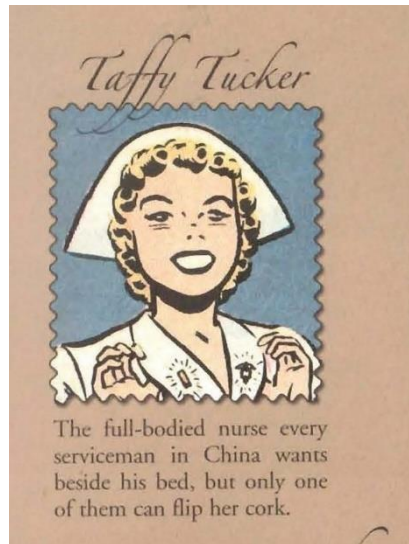


Around 1942/43 during WWII Harriett (not known as Taffy yet, that's coming) and Harvey were stationed in Reno, Nevada as Harvey was a navigation instructor for the Army Air Force. They lived off base, as did many of the other officers. Harriett would drop them off and pick them up each day. Harriett had long hair, and the desert was a hot and dusty place.



Taffy and Harvey (left) in Reno Nevada

One day, after she dropped Harvey off at the base, she had her long tresses cut off. Coincidentally it was the same day that Taffy Tucker, a nurse in Terry and the Pirates, was captured by the cannibals and had her head shaved in preparation of eating her. No fears, Taffy Tucker was saved by the love of her life, Flip Corkin. Taffy picked up the officers with her new hairdo, and the guys dubbed her Taffy Tucker. Taffy hated the name Harriett – the rest is history.



**WHY DANCING TEACHERS EVERYWHERE
APPLAUD *Taffy's* COSTUME SERVICE**

We carry a complete line of dance costumes, footwear and accessories — literally "one-stop-shopping" for all dance needs — from class leotards to the most glamorous recital costumes. We give orders special and careful attention and fill them promptly.

**THREE OF OUR LEADING NUMBERS ARE
SHOWN IN COLOR ON THE OTHER SIDE**

When ordering, send bust, waist and hip measurements, and street dress size. Please specify first and second choice of colors and materials.

10% Discount on orders over 6 pieces. Samples on request.

50% deposit necessary with order. Balance COD or invoiced by delivery date.

Postage: Add 25c for single item, 5c for each additional item.

Delivery 3 weeks.

**SEND FOR OUR LATEST CATALOG TODAY — for the
complete picture of our amazing line.**

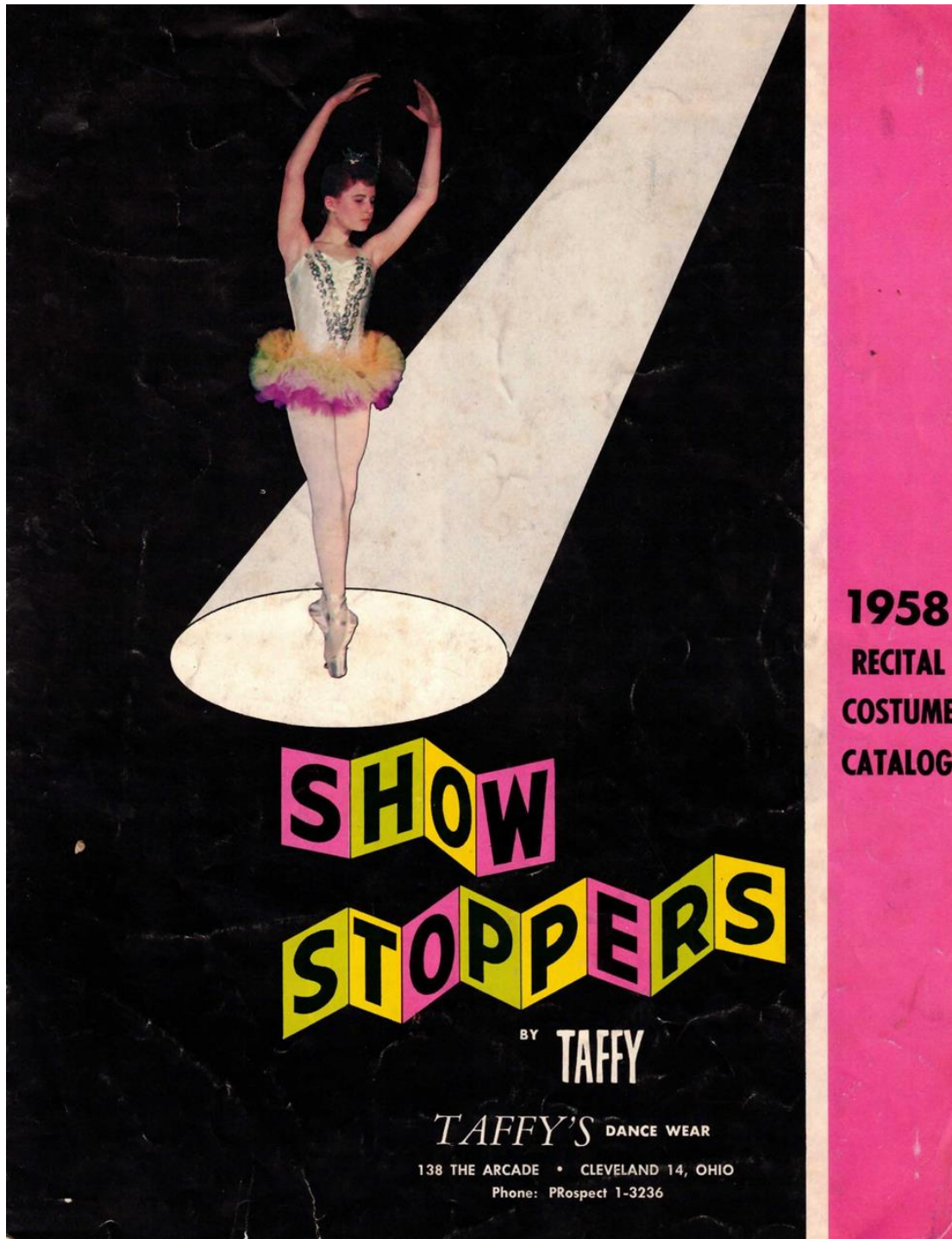
Taffy's

CLEVELAND DANCE FOOTWEAR & COSTUME CO., INC.

138 THE ARCADE • PRospect 1-3236 • CLEVELAND 14, OHIO

PRINTED BY COLOR LITHO, INC., CLEVELAND 13, OHIO

Sales boomed and it became obvious that the costume business was a mail order business all its own. Unlike dancewear which was mostly purchased by individual dancers, costumes were purchased by studios and schools. This meant group sales, not just individual purchases. Taffy's Showstoppers Catalog was first created in 1958.



Cover of the first Taffy's costume catalog, all color and photographed.

At first, there were some costume competitors; most had factories and created their own costumes. Some of the competitors, like Jane Cicci and LaMerle, were seamstresses who made costumes for their local studios and then went national. It was a legacy, family-owned industry well into the 90's. Companies like Bevan's Fabrications, owned by Norman Miller, was originally a fabric house that extended their brand into costumes branded as Costume Gallery. The Miller children went on to not only manage Costume Gallery, but also create the companies Dansco and A Wish Come True. There were many more family-owned costumes companies: some had already been in the dancewear business and expanded into costumes, some new to the industry. Other family owned dancewear and costume companies of the late 50's, 60's and early 70's include Art Stone, Weissman's, Wolf-Fording, Leo's, A. Chatila, Star Styled and Curtain Call. All of these companies followed Taffy's lead and produced costume catalogs that were photographed: you could no longer sell costumes using just sketches. Taffy's competitors totally respected Taffy. "Her competitor's absolutely recognized Taffy was the front runner. They knew this was the person who opened the doors and allowed them to follow", said Rita. Art Stone, owner of Art Stone, once said, "She was a tremendous leader in our industry. She was the first one to do catalogs in color and other things. The first time I met her, I didn't know who she was, but I said, 'Omigod, this has to be the president of Saks Fifth Ave. or something.' Dressed magnificently, in the highest of fashion, she carried herself in a commanding, fabulous way."



Taffy

This kind of notoriety was remarkable. The industry was made up of male owners and directors, in a male dominated world --even though 90% of the customers were women. And yet they respected, admired and followed her every move.

Taffy resisted opening her own factory and sought out costume manufacturers to buy from. I remember going on design trips with Rita and Taffy to costume factories like Miss America, in New Jersey and Distinctive Costumes in Finley, Ohio. Rita was the designer and we played with fabrics and trims for hours to create the latest costumes for the Showstopper catalogs. We went to Theatrical Accessories a small company in southern Ohio where we sourced and designed hats, canes, bow ties, you name it. I remember going to a sequin manufacturing company, Quality Braid in Queens, NY and seeing how sequins were made. We were able to design different trim combinations for Rita's creations. The by-product of making sequins is a roll of metallic material with holes where the sequins had been punched out. It was called, appropriately, honeycomb. Seeing that material gave us ideas, and we used it to make bows, headpieces and trims. These design trips gave Taffy's a competitive edge in bringing exciting new looks and ideas to ready-made costumes. "Unlike the other companies, Taffy's costumes were edgy, and featured new designs every year", said Tighe King, owner of Curtain Call. "Their catalogs were exciting" .

At the same time dance studios began to flourish in small towns and large cities across America. A nexus of events that began a decade before achieved a tipping point. What was once an art form rarely seen outside of big cities in Europe and New York, impresarios like Sol Hurok brought dance to audiences across the country touring companies like the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Moiseyev, the Kirov, Katharine Dunham, The Royal Ballet, Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova and Martha Graham. Hollywood produced Broadway style musicals.



1955 program from London's Festival Ballet brought to Cleveland, Ohio

Most of these dancers came to shop at Taffy's – they had never seen a shop dedicated to dance before

TV brought the June Taylor dancers, Gwen Verdon, Bob Fosse: variety and talent shows into our living rooms. Hollywood produced Broadway style musicals featuring choreographers like Agnes DeMille, Peter Gennaro and George Balanchine and often featured classically trained dancers from the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Ballet Society (later named New York City Ballet), etc. Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds, Jacques d'Amboise, Marc Platt, Matt Mattox and Cyd Charisse all were centerpieces in movies, most famously: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *Singing in the Rain* and *An American in Paris*. Modern art was flourishing. Dance became a part of physical education curriculums at K-12 schools and universities. Professional dancers and college grads started teaching dance in public and private high schools and opening their own studios. The magic of dance captured the imagination of the American public, old and young alike. Dance studios flourished everywhere, creating a demand for dance apparel, dance shoes, recital costumes, music for class and shows and teaching material.

Dance organizations like Dance Masters of America (est.1926) and Dance Educators of America (est. 1932) hosted annual and regional conventions. These gatherings were perfect opportunities for dance vendors to connect with customers and show their wares.

DANCE MASTERS OF OHIO

AFFILIATED CLUB NO. 16
DANCE MASTERS OF AMERICA

OFFICERS


BETTY ADELMAN
PRESIDENT

MARY POLLOCK GRAHAM
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

MARY LOUISE MEGERT
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

MARIE E. MILLER
TREASURER

CLEMENT BROWNE
SECRETARY
49 1/2 E. MILL ST.
AKRON 8, OHIO



OFFICERS

LELA RAE
PRINCIPAL

MARJORIE
HOLZSCHUHER SELLERS
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

BESS NEWTON BROWN
TRUSTEE

KAY LUTES
TRUSTEE

ROSETTA MARKELL
TRUSTEE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
STUDIO JEFFERSON 5-9525 HOME MIDLAKE 4-6251
49 1/2 EAST MILL STREET AKRON 8, OHIO

January 10, 1955

Gentlemen:

The Dance Masters of Ohio will hold a one day convention and normal school Sunday Feburary 13, 1955, at the Deshler-Hilton Hotel, Columbus, Ohio.

Would you like to have a display booth or table at this convention? The cost will be \$10.00 for the day. Make your check payable to the Dance Masters of Ohio and mail to Clement Browne 49½ E. Mill Street, Akron, Ohio.

Brochure, hotel and banquet reservation cards to follow.

Very truly yours,

CLEMENT BROWNE
SECRETARY
DANCE MASTERS OF OHIO

CB/H



1958 Dance Masters Convention - Taffy is pictured bottom row, second from the left.

Companies like Hoctor Records (Danny and Betty Hoctor) and Statler (Jules & Art Stone), produced dance music for class as studios found it difficult and expensive to hire pianists to accompany class. Teachers were not only hungry for teaching material, but also recital routines. As demand grew, Hoctor expanded to dance conventions creating Dance Caravan and followed by Dance Olympus (Jules & Art Stone.) Hosted in hotels, classes were held in ballrooms, much like today. And along with the dancing, vendors set up tables in the lobby, selling dancewear, new products, records and memorabilia to attendees.

One of the teaching artists was a dancer named Bob Kimble, creator of wonderful characters for kid's routines. Bob was a little leprechaun of a man, adorable just like his material. Bob not only taught at the conventions, but he also created a record company, Kimbo Records. (still in business today, selling music and material mostly for K-12 gymnastics and PE). Teachers could buy the recorded music along with the class and routine notes. Teachers would attend a convention and learn the routines in person and purchase the music and notes. At the conventions Bob had an assistant demonstrating the routines. It was 1959, I was 8 and I was Katie the Kangaroo for years and years, hopping on and off stage. Of course, Taffy's created the costumes and featured them in the Showstopper Catalog.

kimbo kids



KATIE THE KANGAROO

Kimbo Record #142

Brown satin-tex, long sleeve leotard. Kit includes orange and brown pouch with baby, felt-ear tiara, both sequin trimmed. Gold braid tail, extra long for swinging. CHILDREN \$5.95 ADULTS \$6.50.



GAY CHICKS

Kimbo Record #112

Yellow satin-tex leotard with three-tier nylon net skirt. Kit includes coq feathers for shoulders, marabou for tiara with "chick" beak. CHILDREN \$5.95 ADULTS \$6.50.



WOULDN'T YOU LIKE ME FOR YOUR VERY OWN

Kimbo Record #136

Long sleeve, black turtle neck leotard and helmet of satin-tex. Kit includes marabou trimmed skunk tail and marabou for helmet and leotard trim. Trim colors: pink, blue or white. CHILDREN \$6.50 ADULTS \$6.95.



BUNNY RABBIT BLUES

Kimbo Record #105

Scoop neck, long sleeve leotard of satin-tex with kit of marabou bunny ears on tiara, marabou cottontail and 2 yds matching marabou for neck and leg trim. Colors: pink, white or blue base; white or pink marabou. CHILDREN \$5.95 ADULTS \$6.50.



WORRYBIRD

Kimbo Record #143

Striped satin-tex, halter-neck leotard with five rows of ruffled net at bodice, two short double-ruffle net skirts and long net drape at back, marabou headpiece. Colors: black/white, white/red, pink/lt. blue. CHILDREN \$6.95 ADULTS \$7.50.



LITTLE CHI-A-NESE

Kimbo Record #144

Strobelite satin print on white background, short coolie coat, green metallic ribbon trim, green coolie hat and fan. CHILDREN \$5.95 ADULTS \$6.50. Kelly satin-tex ankle tights: CHILDREN \$2.75 ADULTS \$2.95.

k o s t u m e s

Trade Mark



BABY TAKE A BOW

Kimbo Record #146

White satin-tex turtle neck, long sleeve "T" shirt. Red slipper satin skirt lined with white satia, silver sequin trimmed. Red felt beanie and megaphone. CHILDREN \$6.95 ADULTS \$7.50.



'RITHMETICK & GE-OR-GAF-FEE

Kimbo Record #145

White slipper satin front leotard, white satin-tex back trimmed with large check taf-feta bow and matching top skirt over two rows of double ruffle white net. Check in black/white, red/white, kelly/white. CHILDREN \$7.95 ADULTS \$8.50.



HAWAIIAN CHA-CHA

Kimbo Record #133

Two-piece satin-tex leotard with strap and bodice gold sequin trimmed. Hawaiian skirt and leis included. Colors: Lavender with amber, gold with kelly, white with red. CHILDREN \$5.95 ADULTS \$6.50.



LEARNING FRENCH IN DANCING SCHOOL

Kimbo Record #137

Slipper satin front, satin-tex back leotard, contrasting satin ruffles at bodice and legs. Separate Can-Can skirt of satin with 3 contrasting satin ruffles. Royal base with green, red, yellow; red with royal, yellow, green; white with royal, green, red. Leotard: CHILDREN \$4.95 ADULTS \$5.50. Skirt \$4.95.



DANCE OF THE WOODEN SHOES

Kimbo Record #148

White organdy blouse, apron and cap. Black satin-tex jumper with peacock slipper satin skirt. CHILDREN \$8.50 ADULTS \$8.95. Wooden shoes available.

THE MOST EXCITING NEWS IN COSTUMES EVER!

Inspired by Kimbo Records, brand new **Kimbo Kids Kostumes** match the favorite Kimbo routines.

Students thrill with the excitement of complete music, choreography and costumes — all together for the best in self-expression and professional-looking recitals.

Kimbo Kids Kostumes make recital plans easy for teachers and **Kimbo Kids Kostumes** are priced so low that recital-time is an economical time for parents, too.

Yours, exclusively, from

TAFFY'S SHOW STOPPERS

Trade Mark

Please note: the stereotypical representations of characters are the reality of the times.

The Conventions grew, and vendors all attended. It was a perfect opportunity to see the customers face to face. To ensure that the conventions gave time for attendees to visit the vendor tables, and to give UDMA vendor members preferred booth positioning. In 1959 Taffy and a few other vendors created the United Dance Merchants of America. Taffy became the Secretary/Treasurer, probably because she was a woman.



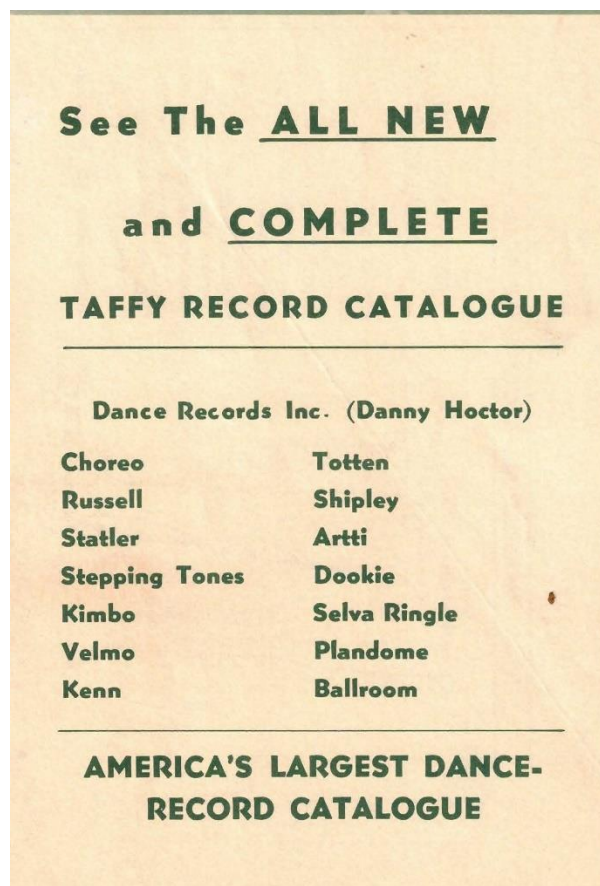
1955 convention. Taffy is 7th in the line, Danny Hctor is the dancing figure to the right, note the men outnumber the women.



Early photo of a UDMA meeting. Rita is on the left in red, Taffy center stage in white, again surrounded by men.

Taffy's, seeing the trend, started to stock records. Teachers from all over came to listen to, read notes and make purchases. There was a steady parade of dance artists of all kinds. Dance teachers, dancers, dance students, dancers from the burlesque and even square dancers. Taffy's expanded to the store front next door and set up a music store. There was a record player and dance records. I remember dance teachers coming in and spending hours listening to records for teaching and routines – dancing all the while. Lots of the records came with notes for teaching and combinations. Music for ballet, tap, jazz, classes, music for kids' work, music for recitals and even square dancing, played throughout the day, no head phones then. "Teachers would come and spend 2-3 hours listening to music, and while they were there, they would buy tights, shoes, leotards, whatever they needed. And they came from everywhere. Taffy's was a social and fun place to be", said Rita.

And of course, there had to be a music catalog that could reach far beyond the store and the conventions.



1958 saw the beginning of a fashion trend, a confluence of social norms and fabric innovations made tights the new fashion statement. Until then, women had to wear uncomfortable garter belts or girdles to hold up their stockings. Women started to notice dancer's tights and adopted them into streetwear.

It's not the first-time dance fashions became street fashions, but it was a turning point for women's and girls' fashions. Tights became a symbol of rebellion from the societal constraints of women. First it was the Mod Look. Turtlenecks and tights. And then Mary Quant and Carnaby Street. Mini skirts begged for matching tights.

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1958

All's Snug



The college girl will think this outfit very sharp. Colorful tights are topped with a short lounging coat in tones to match. Comfortable for fun or study.

Call the Service Department, Plain Dealer, MAIn 1-8368, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. for information. No calls answered on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays. Please do not write unless you live outside the city. In which case enclose a self-addressed, 4-cent stamped envelope. The Department does not make purchases for readers.



Of course I had tights in every color imaginable. Once, at school, a fellow student asked me what color my legs really were because all anyone ever saw of my legs were dressed in tights.

Then, as skirts got shorter and shorter, the mini skirt and color exploded on the streets, tights became an essential part of a woman's wardrobe. Where to buy them? Taffy's!

12/12/58

tights

only **TAFFY'S** has them in

18 Gorgeous Colors 6 Styles

Because we cater exclusively to the world of dance, we have Cleveland's largest stock of tights in the greatest selection of colors and styles imaginable. Every wanted shade and type for the exciting new look in school and campus wear, sports ensembles and lounge wear... Only **TAFFY'S** has them all. Come in and see.



18 Colors—
Aqua, hot orange, copen blue, charcoal, taupe, purple, lemon, royal blue, red, sun-tan, blue spruce, white, hemlock green, russet, navy blue, black, melon, pink.

6 Styles—
Each finest stretch-nylon—Solid tights (as shown, Ivy League, Vertical Ribbed, Seamless, Heather Tweed and special children's styles, Full fashioned.
Mail and Phone Orders Accepted

ADULTS \$3.95
CHILDREN TODDLERS \$3.50

TAFFY'S **DANCE WEAR**

138 Old Arcade—Euclid Level
PRospect 1-3236

OPEN
Mon. &
Thurs. Eves.
'Til 9 P.M.

Taffy's ad for tights 1958

As new fabrics were developed and manufacturing capabilities improved, dance products grew as well.

THE JAZZ TOP
 Stripe Satintex Midriff Top.
 Black, Aqua, Red with White.
 Adult 10 - 20 2.95



Jazz Pants

Revolutionary garments of form-fitting Faillie Lastex. Glamour garb for Stage, Studio or Sport.
 Adult Sizes 8 - 16.

- # 400 Solid Colors: Black, White, Red, Aqua. 7.95
- # 500 Embroidered, Black with White, Red with Black, White with Black, 9.95
- # 501 Baby check lastex, Black/White, Red/White, Blue/White 9.95
- # 502 Lame lastex, Black, Silver, Gold 13.95
- Matching Lame Vest 7.95

See Taffy's Color Guide for choice of fabrics and complete color range Page 14



112 LONG SLEEVE ITAL COLLAR FRONT ZIPPER

- Durene Rib
- Child 4.50
- Adult 4.95
- Daisytag
- Child 5.75
- Adult 6.75

- Durene Rib 1.75
- Helanca Nylon 1.95

500 TIGHTS


- Durene Rib 3.95
- Daisytag - with feet 5.65
- no feet 5.45



300 COWL NECK LEOTARD

- Daisytag
- Solid Colors 7.50
- Two Colors 7.50


(Combinations of Red/Black, Gray/Turquoise, Royal/Tangerine)



56 A Dolman sleeve, zipper back - V neck front and back.
 (Not illustrated) - Straight Ital front, V Back.
 S, M, L 7.95
 Extra lge 8.25

Dancewear Of Greenwich Village

A new fabric of double-ply elasticized cotton jersey styled in New York Hi-Style fashion with HIGH RISE at high line.
 Colors: Black, White, Cherry, Maize, Turquoise, Grey, Olive.



56 Turtle Neck, Long Sleeve, Back Zipper.
 S, M, L 7.50
 Extra lge. 7.75

(not illustrated)

56-S Turtle Neck, Short Sleeve.
 S, M, L 6.95
 Extra lge. 7.25

1958-59 catalog images

By 1960 Taffy's had expanded. Taffy's of Dallas opened that year, a second Ohio store opened in 1961. Atlanta opened in 1966 and Boston, managed by Rita, opened in 1968. By 1970 a store in Salt Lake City was added to the collection. At the same time the catalogs got bigger as the product offerings grew. Throughout the 1960's Taffy's collected a wide range of products. Never before had such a wide range of products been available all in one place.

Along with *Danskin*, and their expanded range of leotards, tights and unitards, shoppers would find garments and shoes, imported and domestic, from brands such as *Capezio*, *Freed's*, *Selva*, *Gamba*, *Gandolfi*, *Repetto*, *The Dance Center of London*. Many of the products were exclusive to Taffy's. A line of high fashioned leotards made by *Lastonet of London* were only available at Taffy's.

The record catalog was enormous, with over 30 record labels now available.



The '60's also brought social changes that strongly influenced the growth of Taffy's. Taffy and Harvey divorced in 1961, a rarity at the time. Taffy, strong willed and fearless, focused all her energies on the business. Always fashion conscious and elegant, she vowed to make Taffy's the "Neiman Marcus of the dance world". She surrounded herself with other strong women. Rita and Judy both became influential collaborators and, with Taffy's encouragement, helped to shape the Taffy's image. The Women's Liberation movement along with the freedoms of the 60's created the perfect environment for the growth of Taffy's and the business. These were my influencers: the women and the times.

A Taste of Taffy

Taffy always said "I am the luckiest person in the world", even after 2 bouts with Breast Cancer and Triple Bi-Pass heart surgery. A heavy smoker until the night before her heart surgery, Taffy had a will like no one else. When she set her mind to something, there was no stopping her. After the divorce she promised us, and herself, that our quality of life would not change. I always imagined she married the business instead of another person. She insisted she didn't care about making money, Taffy's was the love of her life. Our "daddy replacement" was a wired haired dachshund named Doc. Doc went to work every day and was even a model in many of the catalogs. He was the first of five more dachshunds that worked and played at Taffy's.

The store moved from the Old Arcade to the suburbs in the early '60's. The store front was soon too small to house a retail store, a mail order business and a central location for distribution of inventory. The mail-order and fulfillment officially moved to a warehouse, not far from the retail store.

Taffy insisted on NO OFFICE. Her work outfits were always jumpsuits, so she didn't have to think about putting ensembles together. Her morning routine: she personally opened all the mail herself and distributed it into cubby holes situated in a common area. She could mentally calculate the incoming orders and any daily bills. Next stop, the bookkeeping office to go over the finances based on her mental calculations. Then, off to the visit the other departments, and help anywhere that was needed. And she could always, as she said, "smell a rat". She had the uncanny ability to sense issues, find incongruencies or errors when no one else had a clue, and then fix them. I learned early on not to bring her any problems without exhausting every solution I could think of. And invariably she would listen and then ask me "did you try (fill in the blank) or "did you call (blank)?" I challenged myself to be able to say "yes, I tried that" each time, but she always came up with a pathway I had not thought of.

She always told me that if she was walking behind one of her employees, and they walked past a rubber band on the floor and didn't pick it up, their days were numbered as an employee, because the obviously didn't care. The warehouse was one big happy family, mostly female, but there were the occasional men. Staff was able to bring their kids to work, there was even a play area set up. When one of the staff had family problems, Taffy was right there to help. Whatever it took, she was there. Especially for newly divorced or single moms. A safe haven for women to find support and be able to fend for themselves, just like Taffy did.

Taffy loved theatre. A few times a year she would take me and Rita, to New York to see shows. Two shows on Wednesdays, then a Thursday and a Friday show. Shopping during the day. Rita remembers these trips as the “best part of working for Taffy’s”

I learned early on it was easier to tell her where I was or what I was doing, then let her worry, because she would find me or find out anyway. I went away to Switzerland to boarding school in 1968. I went because I really disliked public school, and Taffy would let me go to work instead of school whenever I wanted, as long as I went to my dance classes and worked at the store or warehouse. The local high school wasn’t too keen on this, so Taffy suggested I go away to school. One spring break, after visiting home, I returned to school and forgot to let her know I had arrived safely. The next thing I knew, in the middle of the night, there was a knock on the door. “Your mother is looking for you, please come with us”. It was the Swiss police, and I was taken to the station. It turned out that there was a phone strike in the States, but Taffy was determined to make sure I had arrived back at school. Somehow, she had contacted the president of New Jersey Bell, and got a call to the local police station. I got on the phone to be reamed out by the Pres – then, please hold for your mother. Taffy came on the line, sweet as could be “hello honey, I am so glad you are safe. Next time, please let me know”.

The Stores

By the end of the end of the 70’s there were 7 Taffy’s stores: 2 in Atlanta, Boston, two in Cleveland, Dallas and Seattle (Salt Lake City closed in the late 60’s). And by 1981 there were thirteen: two in Georgia; Atlanta and Marietta; two in Cleveland: Cleveland and Parma, Dallas, Fort Worth, Boston had two stores; Wellesley and Kenmore Square, two in Seattle, and stores in San Jose California, Memphis and New York City. Rita opened an annex called Taffy’s Too, filled with closeout merchandise. The New York City store opened in the early ‘80’s.

Under Taffy’s directions all the stores offered top notch customer services. Managers contacted the area studios and made notes of studio preferences. Next to the cash register was a 3 X 5 box. Each studio had an index card that outlined the studio’s leotard, tights and shoe requirements, down to the brand, styles and preferred fit. In the fall we did fittings, an idea Taffy formed and tried out in the early years. Why not bring the store to the studios? I remember early Saturday mornings, loading up the station wagon with leotard and tights samples, shoe fitting sets and accessories. We had order forms, supplies and snacks and off we would go to an area studio. Then we would unload the car and set up our satellite store. We would spend the entire day fitting dancers and taking orders. Then, we loaded everything back into the car, and drove back to the store. Once at the store we would unload and collate the orders. This loading, unpacking, reloading and unpacking made Taffy name us “The Family Von Schlep”. Over the next few days we would fill the orders, put names on the packages and deliver the orders in time for their next class.

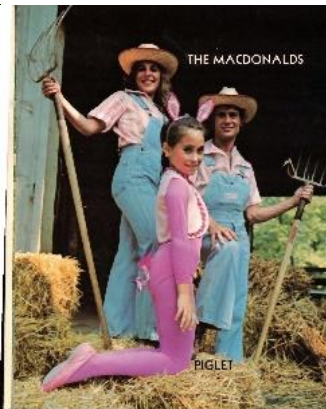
Stores invited studios to bring whole classes into the stores for private shopping days. Patty Delaney, Professor Emerita Division of Dance, Southern Methodist University, grew up dancing in a small Texas town, about an hour from the Dallas store. She remembers such a trip “It was always a big deal. Most of us didn’t come to Dallas very often so that in itself was exciting. The staff was always great and made us

Taffy's was more than a dancewear shop. Taffy's was not just a place to find the latest products, but a place where the managers and staff were dancers and creative artists who would work with designers, teachers and choreographers to discover just the right items to fulfill a need, theme or concept. It was a meeting place, a community of likeminded customers and staff. Rita was known for spending hours with a studio owner, going over the recital numbers and matching them with costumes and accessories, often creating unusual and exciting pairings for the perfect match to the music and the themes. Danny Lather, manager of the Atlanta store, would make costume packages complete with tights and shoes if ordered, put individual names, class day and time on the sets and hand deliver them to studios for the recitals.

Judy was now directing all the advertising and catalog production. As a former dancer tapping into her own creativity, the catalogs and advertising continued to be groundbreaking. The 1968 Show Stopper Costume Catalog, had all color photographs and was now 50 pages of readymade recital costumes and basics for all ages. Shot on location and often outdoors the Taffy's catalog distinguished itself from all of the other costume/dancewear company competitors in products, photography and innovation.

In above: Glorious Gray Nineties; cycling was quite the rage. Marie's 1924 27 320; WHEELIN' goes The Blue Brigade. **SIDE BY SIDE** (2nd) Shoppers, navy blue backless stretch nylon, totes with long sleeves and wideband, open, white and pink trapeze inserts front and back. **WHEELIN'** (right) Long-sleeved, glass-beret in hood, gossamer pattern of tulle with white and light blue, tulle, in. Flare-length, navy, is not on cart. **The Blue Brigade:** The very elegant, full and covered, now difficult to ride, and not really suitable for the womanly, the more practical, much later, open-shoulder, on the right, now transformed a few years later and helped produce the decade's cycling craze.

40



THE MACDONALD

Supervising the menagerie at Cedar Point's Animal Farm are Old Macdonald and his Old Lady. Please note: THE MACDONALDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN CHILD SIZES ONLY.

PIGLET This little piggy wears actually colored glass in brown, pink and can come in (order in PIGLET KIT) with tortoiseshell and it's a (order separately).

BUMBLEBEE This busy creature tries hard to be no BEE. It's all spinning wings, wings, in two colors and one piece. Comes with two stopper and a glass of cold water.

BIG BAD BEAR Gentle as your Teddybear, this "Honey" wears BEAR KIT... a gold sequin trimmings, green legs, a pair of reds and large bow-tie with eyes. Don't mix with, nose, priced separately.

HORSE This elegant outfit shows off every ribbon in the package. Separate the ring, ears and tail and the ear piece. When not in use, and it's a priced separately.

LION How the lioness roar? It's a wild creature KIT, plus a large sequin trimmings, green legs, a pair of reds and large bow-tie with eyes. Don't mix with, nose, priced separately.

ZEBRA One coat to the horse, wears zebra print with white tail to give all around. Zebra has a tail and included. Black eyes and tortoiseshell nose separately.



Shot at Cedar Point Amusement Park

The dancewear catalog, although still sketches, expanded the offerings to products never before available through the mail or only at exclusive dancewear shops in NYC or LA. Shoppers could now purchase imported garments, knitwear, and garments for more contemporary genres and for men. The Taffy's exclusive leotards now totaled 35 garments.

T A F F Y S I M P O R T S

la danse c'est
Repetto*

33 TUNIQUE COTON SANS MANCHES
Premier quality cotton leotard, sleeveless, with v-neck and sheer ruffle at hipline. Seamed for superb style, comfort and fit. Black, pale blue, pink, white.
Child sizes 9.00
Adult sizes 10.00

33ML TUNIQUE COTON MANCHES LONGUE
Long sleeved version of Taffy's famous "French Leotard" (#33 above.)
Child sizes 10.50
Adult sizes 11.50

542 TUNIQUE CONSERVATOIRE
Nylon "Snobissimo" Grecian style tunic with split skirt and attached brief. Black, cobalt blue, orange, pale blue, white yellow. Adult S, M, L. 23.95

541 TUNIQUE REPETTO
Nylon "Snobissimo" for elegant fashion in a skirted tunic with crossed bodice and attached briefs. Black, cobalt blue, orange, pale blue, white, yellow. Adult S, M, L. 23.95

35bis TUNIQUE EMPIRE
Another "Couture" leotard of the most beautiful nylon. Deep scoop neck, lovely short sleeves, nylon ruffle all around hip. Black, cobalt blue, orange, pale blue, white, yellow. Adult S, M, L. 21.00

*Repetto Dancewear is imported to the USA exclusively by Taffy's

Some of the Repetto garments from France

ADAGIO #66 BY TUNICS
Boat neck sleeveless leotard has low back, utter simplicity of style. In black, the official leotard for R.A.D. major work. In Wedgewood blue, the choice of the I.S.T.O.
Leotard - Adult P,S,M,L 6.50
Matching circular skirt - S,M,L 6.00

R.A.D. ACADEMY LEOTARD
Lovely sleeveless leotard with attached pleated skirt. V-neck, zipless, of 2/60 heavy weight non-transparent stretch nylon. Pink, white, pale blue, black.
Child sizes 9.50
Adult sizes P, S, M, L 11.50

MILADY
Boat neck skirted leotard with 3/4 sleeve.
Colors for MILADY and GRACE: black, red, royal, turquoise, purple, burgundy, emerald green.
Child sizes 9.95
Adult sizes 11.95

GRACE
V-neck skirted leotard with 3/4 sleeve.
Colors for MILADY and GRACE: black, red, royal, turquoise, purple, burgundy, emerald green.
Child sizes 9.95
Adult sizes 11.95

CHRISTINA
Elegantly styled skirted leotard with high neck, long sleeves and full back zip. Perfect for skating, lovely for dance. Heavyweight nylon in emerald, maroon, navy.
..... Ch 12.95/Ad 16.95

TAFFY'S IMPORTS
Made in England by Lastonet* and Tunics
*IMPORTED TO THE U.S.A. EXCLUSIVELY BY TAFFY'S

Official Royal Academy of Dance leotards from England

STRICTLY MODERN

BELLS 100% wool bells in a variety of colors. Please see page 8. Great to wear over tights or instead of tights for class, warmup or stage.
S, M, L, XL 25.00

SANDALSOL Protection for the ball of the foot, freedom of toes for barefoot control. Full sizes only. Black or tan. Sizes 4-8 5.25

MEN'S WRAP SHIRT (#89) Brand new easy shirt of 100% stretch nylon. Black, brown, burgundy.
S, M, L 10.95

UNITARD (imported) Nylon "snobissima", the European favorite, a sleeveless tank style unitard, footless. Black, purple, rust, white.
Women's sizes S, M, L 26.00 Men's sizes S, M, L 28.00

LYRIC MIDI DRESS Great for Modern Dance or Modern Jazz, a mid-length all helanca stretch dress with turtle neck and long sleeves. Black only. Adult S, M, L 32.00

WOOL TIGHTS (#461) (imported) Fine Knit Wool tights for men or women. Black, grey, navy, pale blue, pink, white. S, M, L, XL 15.50

CROSSOVER (#47) "Heart warmer", all wool crossover sweater to match tights. S, M, L 19.00

Garments for contemporary genres



BALLETNITS

BALLETNITS garments are available in black, brown, burgundy, ballet pink, and navy.

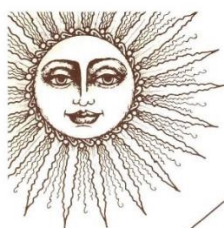
Sizes: Adult S, M, L.

Professional knitted dancewear, designed and produced by dancers, for dancers, these garments are both beautiful and functional. For years they have been enjoyed by dancers to allow the body to become flexible and warm and to maintain this condition throughout class.

Longsleeve leotard, ideal for warmth 17.95
Stirrup ankle to thigh leg warmers 10.50

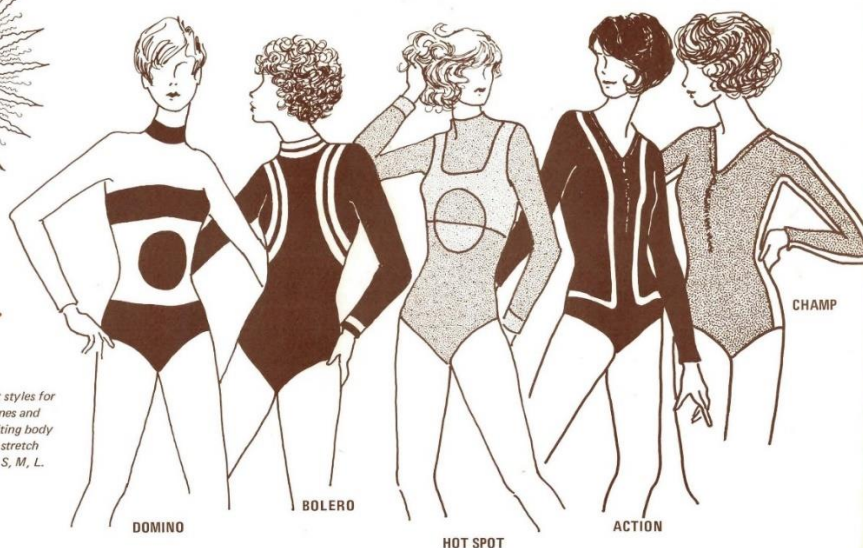
(D) Sleeveless leotard 15.95
NOT SHOWN

Knitwear



GREAT STYLES

Bold new great styles for action, using lines and shapes for exciting body geometry. All stretch nylon in Child S, M, L. Adult S, M, L.



DOMINO A graphic winner combines bold patterns of black and definitely non-transparent white heavyweight stretch nylon for this longsleeve, turtleneck, back-zipped leotard Ch 12.95/Ad 14.95

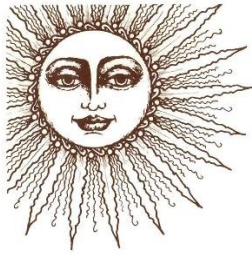
BOLERO Longsleeve turtleneck leotard has curvy bands of white nylon around neck, cuffs and bodice creating a bolero effect. Stunning in navy with white Ch 12.95/Ad 14.95

HOT SPOT Unique combination of red and purple on longsleeve back-zipped turtleneck in lightweight stretch nylon . . . Ch 12.95/Ad 14.95

ACTION Action lines of white contour front of heavyweight nylon frontzip leotard with long sleeves. Emerald, maroon or navy. . . . Ch 11.95/Ad 14.95

CHAMP Racing stripes streak sides, inside and topside of arms and v-neck of longsleeve frontzip leotard of heavyweight stretch nylon. Emerald, maroon, red, royal. . . . Ch 11.95/Ad 14.95

Some of the Exclusive Color Blocked leotards, only available at Taffy's



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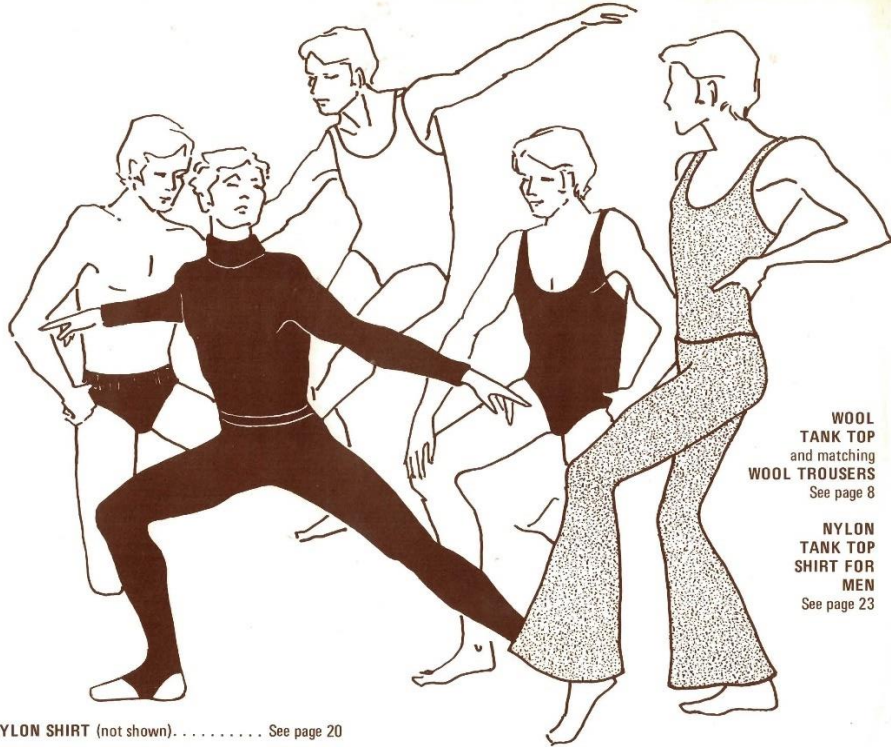
MEN'S DANCE SUPPORTS

CAPEZIO Light weight comfortable support in black, nude, white.
S, M, L. 6.50

DANSKIN Nylon/lastex invisible support. Black or white.
S/M, L. 5.00

LASTONET Light weight Lycra. Black or white.
S, M, L. 4.95

DIAMOND Strong elastic support, 5" wide. Black or white.
Sizes 24-40 5.50



MEN'S WRAP NYLON SHIRT (not shown). See page 20

TURTLENECK SHIRT Helanca nylon pullover shirt with long sleeves. Black or white. Adult only S, M, L. 9.00

MEN'S TIGHTS Heavy nylon specifically for men. Black, grey, navy, white. With feet or footless 7.50 Stirrup 8.25
Wool tights See pages 7, 21, 23

BOYS' TIGHTS Black, grey, white. Large child only. 6.50

WOOL TANK TOP
and matching
WOOL TROUSERS
See page 8

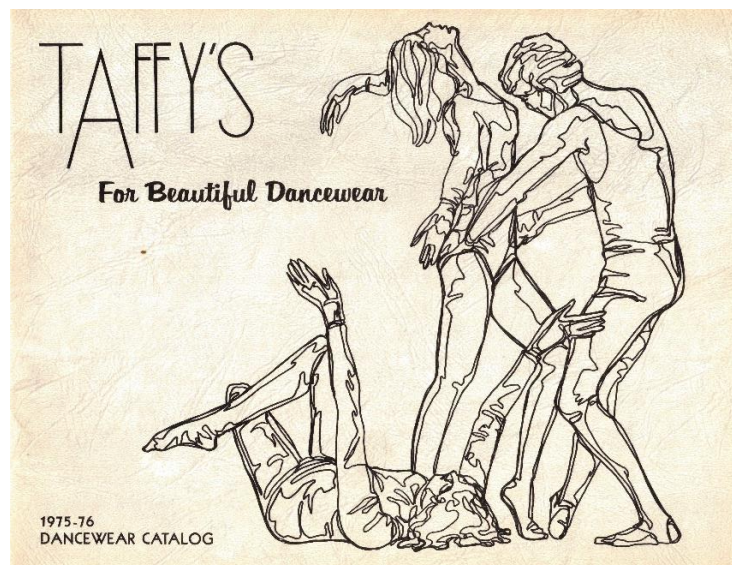
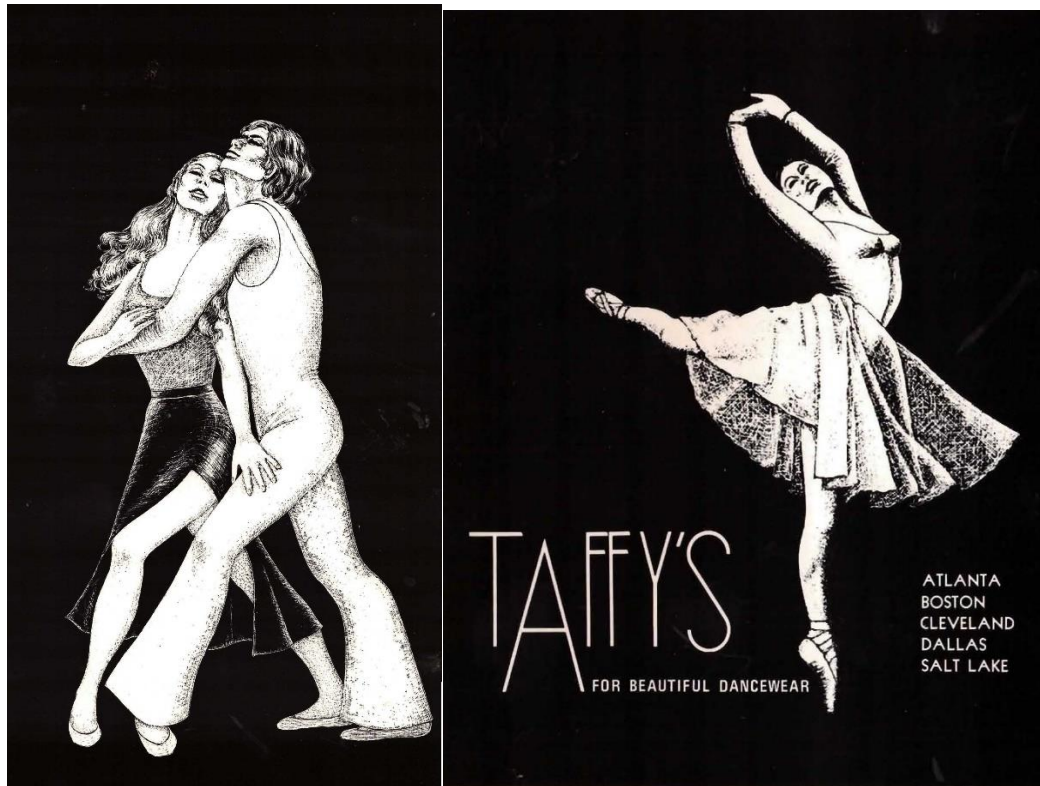
NYLON TANK TOP SHIRT FOR MEN
See page 23

STEP-IN STYLE SHIRT 100% stretch nylon leotard designed for men for gymnastics or dance. Plain white or with navy piping.
S, M, L. 9.00

DANSKIN TANKSUIT FOR MEN (#1140) Popular styling cut just for men. Black, gold, navy, red, velvet brown, white.
Two sizes: S/M and L 7.00

Garments for Men

The advertising images were also powerful

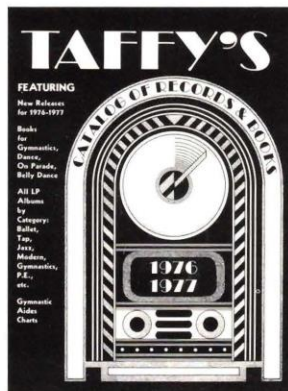


Besides the dancewear, costume and record catalogs – there was now a whole line up of catalogs.

OTHER GREAT CATALOGS AVAILABLE FROM TAFFY'S



TAFFY'S ON PARADE Published every spring for marching and twirling groups, drill teams, pompon teams, schools, recreation departments... a complete display of sensational outfits in sequins, stretch nylon, doubleknit nylon, a great array of crowns, tiaras, hats, batons, boots, fancy and military trim, sequin and jewel motifs and all majorette accessories.



TAFFY'S CATALOG OF RECORDS AND BOOKS A comprehensive catalog of records and books and educational teaching aids for all types of activities: classical ballet, tap, modern dance, jazz, gymnastics, physical education, keep fit, belly dance, folk dance, square dance... plus a complete selection of routines and manuals, all by outstanding teachers and musicians of our time. A MUST for any teacher or serious student. The ONLY comprehensive cross-listing of all LP's available. (Keep your copy of the 1975-1976 catalog for the alphabetical listings of all records.)



TAFFY'S SHOWSTOPPERS RECITAL COSTUME CATALOG New each year... for dance teachers, performing groups, recreation departments, skating clubs... a thrilling collection of up to date recital costumes and sparkling ideas for your revue. Costumes for boys and girls, kids and adults, trimmed leotards, kits to dress up your own leotards, headpieces, basics and hi-style leotards, accessories galore. Showstoppers Costumes are TOPS! but not necessarily in price. Watch for the 1977 line where you'll find the PRICES ARE RIGHT!



TAFFY'S GREAT SKATING STYLES For skaters, teachers, and dancers too... In fact, anyone interested in beautiful skirted leotards and costumes will want to have this colorful catalog from Taffy's. Look for the 1977 issue, due to be published in the fall of this year.



TAFFY'S GYM-KIN FOR YOU! New and exciting news flash for the 1976 - 1977 season... Gym-Kin leotards and other apparel are now available at Taffy's... all the retail stores and thru the mail (see our Mail Order Address). Watch for Taffy's newest catalog... GYM-KIN FOR YOU! Don't forget, TAFFY'S is "where its at!"



THE BELLY DANCING EXPERIENCE Taffy's brochure for teachers, students, and everyone who is captivated by the ancient art of belly dance. Records, costumes, practice apparel, jewelry... a glamorous and exciting way to keep fit... and enjoy it.

By 1974 Taffy had finally had her own manufacturing plant, and this opened new possibilities in designs and products for costumes, drill team, skating and more. Taffy's needed a designer/pattern maker and was fortunate to find a talented woman, recently divorced, kids gone from the house, who was once a couture fashion designer in NYC. I never knew her real name, I don't think she liked it, and so we called her simply "E". A wonderful, creative addition to the all-female team.

1976/77 was a watershed moment for me, and Taffy's. That's the year I moved to Dallas and went to Southern Methodist University as a dance major. Even with all the dance, dance mentors and dancers in my life, I had never been immersed in a conservatory atmosphere. It was the first time I was surrounded by serious dance and dancers. I took dance classes all day long, trained under amazing teachers, was introduced to the Graham technique, and studied dance history, embarrassingly a subject never discussed in all my dance training prior to this moment. The dancers were amazing, more beautiful than any other dancers I had ever taken class with. When I wasn't in school, I worked at the Taffy's of Dallas. I never told any of my fellow dancers or teachers that Taffy was my mother. As you can imagine, my dancewear wardrobe was immense as I could have anything I wanted from the vast inventory. I wanted to look like everyone else, so I often put holes in my tights and dirtied my shoes.

One day I was in the dressing room at SMU and some of the dancers were looking at a Taffy's Costume catalog, laughing and calling it "Tacky's". I was hurt and stunned. Didn't they know about all the beautiful dancewear and shoes Taffy's sold in addition to the costumes? Didn't they know that Taffy's was more than a costume company? It was one of those "ah-ha" moments for me. It was time to change that image. I imagined a dancewear catalog featuring beautiful dancers dancing. A dancewear catalog that captured the dancer's experience. I called Taffy (I never called her Mom – she didn't answer to it, and she also thought it was unprofessional in the working environment). I told her my idea. Taffy, always open to new ideas and a risk taker, "Sure. Why not." My chance to lend my creative voice to the trajectory of the industry had come.

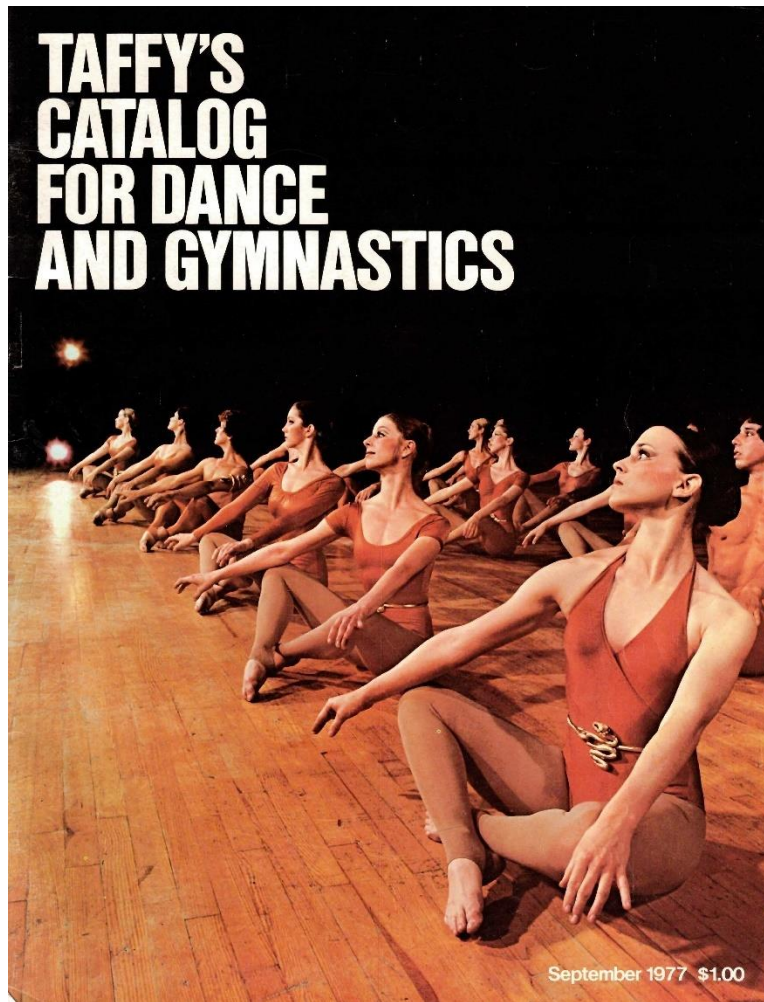
Taffy had a long-standing relationship with Dallas, and with SMU in particular. She was good friends with Nikita Talin. Nikita (born Howard Spearling who changed his name to sound more Russian, as was the trend back then) came from the Harkness Ballet to SMU. There is a story that he kidnapped Taffy at the opening night party for the Dallas store and plied her with drinks and entertainment all night long.

This relationship with SMU helped to paved the way for the collaboration that was about to happen.

Once again Taffy's was about to change an industry. It was the start of a new era in dancewear mail-order catalogs and the trickle-down effect for the stores. For the next decade Taffy's produced amazing dance catalogs, filled with moving images and capturing the spirit of dance. Dancers' love seeing photos of beautiful dancers dancing. It took a while, but other catalog companies followed the lead. It was no longer OK to show model's posing, sometimes with poor technique. Photographs in catalogs featuring moving dancers is now commonplace, but in 1977 it was fantastic.

The first task in producing these catalogs was to find a commercial photographer. After a brief search in the Dallas area, we found King Douglas. King was a dancer/gymnast/photographer. A protege of Stanley Hall's in California he went on to perform with

the Boston Ballet. He was also an avid photographer, starting at a very young age. He knew that he would not have a long career in dance so he got himself extremely well trained in commercial photography at the same time that he was dancing in summer stock and Regional Ballet Festivals. It was at one of these festivals that he was spotted by Virginia Williams, who offered him a contract with the Boston Ballet, where he danced for a few years. By this time he was in his late 20's, nearing the end of his performing career. When he retired from dancing he moved to Dallas where he had connections with a commercial photography company. In my search for a photographer for this project I interviewed a handful of candidates. King was without a doubt the right person for the job. With his gymnastic and dance background, along with his understanding of commercial photography, King was a formidable addition to the creative team of Judy and me, and of course Taffy, who supported the project 100%. By this time Judy had also retired from performing and was working full time at Taffy's as the Director of Marketing. With Judy's creative leadership, King's photographic prowess, Taffy's undying trust and support along with my dance connections, we made a formidable team. We were the perfect production team, all of us with a dance background, we could communicate with an unspoken, understood language. Tony Beck, then Chair of the SMU Dance Division saw the mutually beneficial alliance and allowed us access to the dancers, studios, theatres, and the campus. Our concept: to create a catalog that highlighted the products and the magic and romance of dance, with the idea that beautiful moving images would inspire and spur sales. These catalogs would validate Taffy's not only as a leader of the industry, more than just a costume company, but also illustrated that Taffy's had a deep understanding of dance. King remembers: "Working for Taffy's was fulfilling, inspiring, terribly challenging and rewarding both artistically and financially, and changed everything for me as an artist."



1977 Dancewear Catalog cover

1977 Catalog spreads

Romantic Dresses

PRINT CHIFFON DRESS
Wrap ballet dress with cascade skirt falling from the waist, ruffled neckline, self-belt. Colors as shown only. Ad S, M, L, 21.95




PRINT CHIFFON DRESS

CHIFFON DRESS
Wrap ballet dress with circular skirt falling from waist, ruffled neckline, self-belt. Lilac, white, black. Ad S, M, L, 21.95



CHIFFON DRESS

RIBBON-STRIPE CHIFFON DRESS
Wrap ballet dress with cascade skirt falling from waist, ruffled neckline, self-belt. Blue, pink. Ad S, M, L, 22.95



PRINT CHIFFON DRESS

RIBBON-STRIPE CHIFFON DRESS
Wrap ballet dress with cascade skirt falling from waist, ruffled neckline, self-belt. Blue, pink. Ad S, M, L, 22.95



RIBBON-STRIPE CHIFFON DRESS

Mazzy Smith, student of Ann Eagon




Taffy's exclusive designs – created by “E”

Serenade in White

Classical Imports



R.A.D. ACADEMY LEOTARD V-neck, zipper, sleeveless leotard has attached pleated skirt. Ballet pink, white, sky blue or black. Ch S, M, L 10.95/Ad P, S, M, L 13.50

REPETTO #33 "Tunique Cotton sans manches." Premier cotton sleeveless leotard. Delicate sheer ruffle around hips. Black, white, pale blue, light pink. Ch S, M, L 11.95/Ad P, S, M, L 12.95

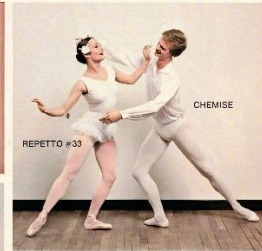
REPETTO #33ML "Tunique Cotton avec manches longues." Long sleeve version of #33 (above). Same colors. Ch S, M, L 12.95/Ad P, S, M, L 13.95

CHEMISE DANSEUR All nylon classical chemise for men has full blouse sleeves. Pull over style has elastic waist, traditional collar. Boys' 8, 10, 12 22.00 Men's 40, 42, 44, 46 28.00

REPETTO #542 "Tunique Conservatoire" a skirted nylon leotard with wide round neck. Grecian split skirt, no sleeves. Black, pale blue, white. Ad S, M, L 19.95

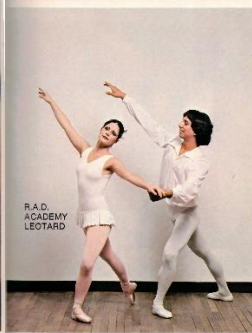
REPETTO #35b "Tunique Empire" A deep scoop neck, short sleeves and attached skirt are simple yet elegant. Black, pale blue, white. Ad S, M, L 21.95

REPETTO #541 "Tunique Repetto" Exquisitely styled crossover bodice on sleeveless skirted leotard of French nylon. Black, white, or pale blue. Ad S, M, L 24.95



REPETTO #33

CHEMISE



R.A.D. ACADEMY LEOTARD



#541

#35b

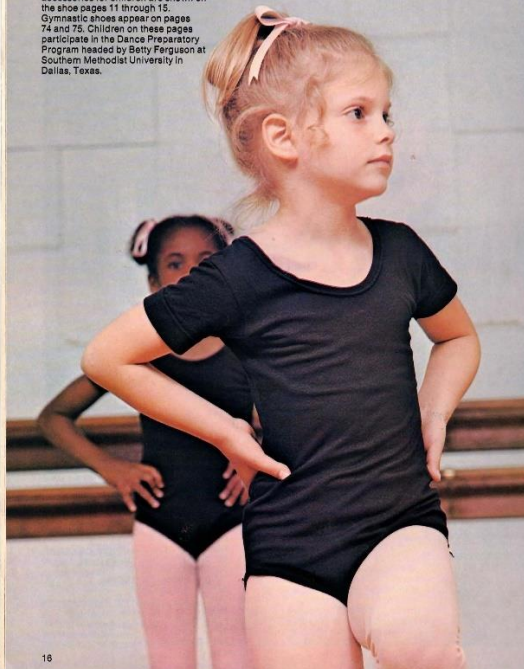
#542

34

35

Dancing is definitely for children... so is Taffy's

Tap shoes, ballet shoes and shoe accessories for children are shown on the shoe pages 11 through 15. Gymnastic shoes appear on pages 74 and 75. Children on these pages participate in the Dance Preparatory Program headed by Betty Ferguson at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.



16



BALLET HAT BOX Eleven inches in diameter, this tote will hold lots of supplies. Four colors on pink. 4.50



TOTE BOX Just right for a pair of shoes, the favorite tote for little people is shaped like a shoebox with a long handle. Pink or light blue with dancer. 3.00



BALLET BOX Another student favorite has separate section for shoes. Black, blue or red. 4.25



A LITTLE SMILE Plastic smile faces on elastic bands are great as tap shoe ties, hair bands, or whatever. In a grab bag of pastels. 40¢ per pair

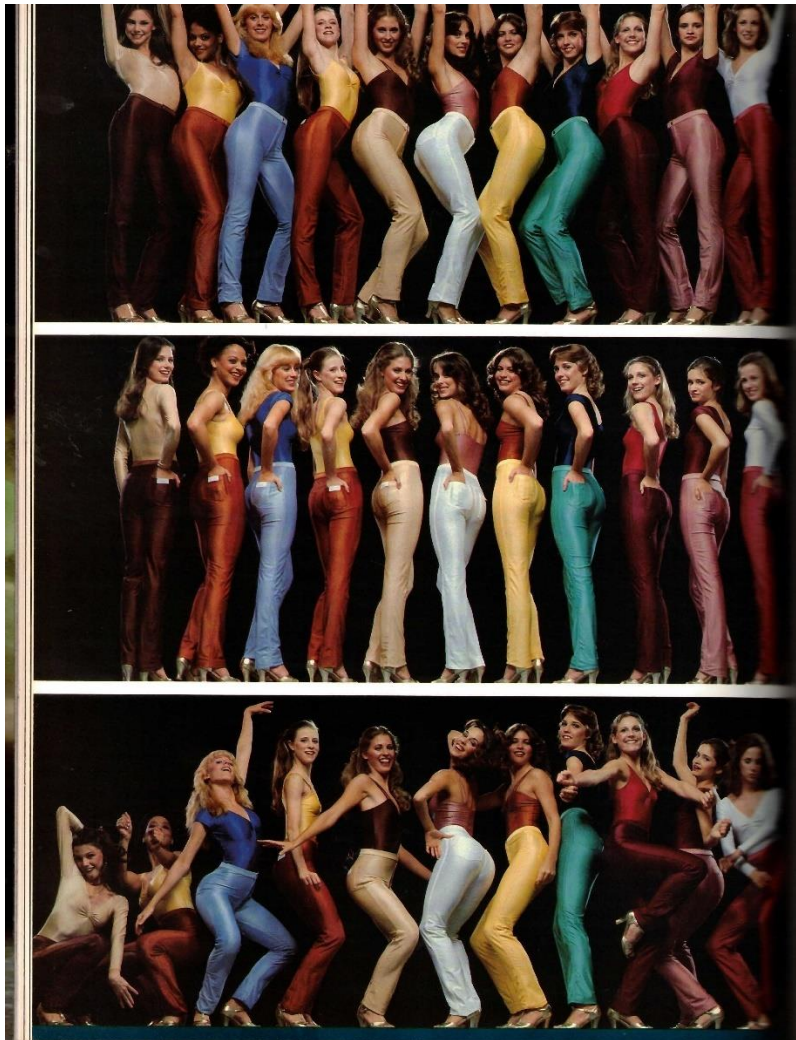
17



The 70's brought fabric innovations – shiny, matte and cotton Spandex Lycra. Lycra Spandex was a game changer. The fabric dyed to beautiful rainbow colors, and the cotton Lycra took on soft subtle, pastel hues. Bodywear would never be the same. Until now, recital costumes were generally satin fronts, trimmed, with spring weave backs that could not be trimmed. A jarring look when the dancers turned around – design/no design/design again as they faced front. Shiny Lycra allowed costume manufacturers to create designs that were trimmed front and back, while keeping the shine and vibrant colors needed for costumes. Costumes could be satin fronts, with matching lycra backs, or all lycra-- costumes became 3-dimensional. This more form fitting and versatile bodywear had a whole new look as brands like Danskin, Capezio and Flexatard started using the fabric. Shiny Lycra crossed over to streetwear as well. It was the age of disco, lite dance floors and mirror balls, popularized by the movie *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). Danskin was the first to create a line of crossover, lycra bodywear called Free style.



Danskin Freestyle bodywear for class, stage and disco. We shot the entire catalog section at midnight at a local Dallas disco featuring dancers from the SMU Dance Division. If you look closely you might find me in the crowd.



1979 - Flexatard leotards and jeans fabricated in Shiny Lycra – a crossover to streetwear and disco

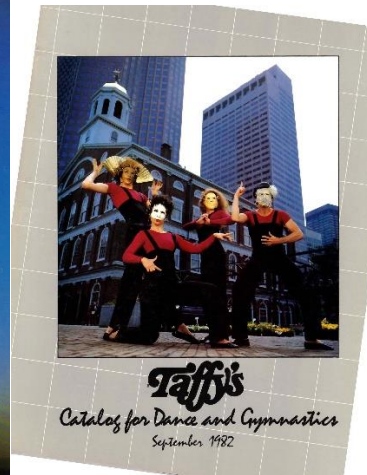
Sometime in 1979 I moved from Dallas, Texas back to Cleveland, Ohio and began my MFA training at Case Western Reserve University, under the direction of Kathryn Karipides and Kelly Holt, a Hawkins based program. There I met Gina Gibney, a fellow MFA candidate. Gina asked me to be in her graduate concert that year. Gina's mother was a character! Heavy smoker, raspy voice and bigger than life. She was also a gifted designer and costume maker. She took a cotton, Lycra leotard, royal blue cotton as I remember it, and dyed a flowing fabric to match. She attached a skirt to the leotard and created a beautiful dance dress. I will never forget wearing it and the wonderful feeling of dancing as the skirt followed my every move and enhanced the twists and turns of the choreography. I immediately took the dress to "E" and asked her to copy it. This was the first commercially available dance dress. The possibilities became endless, skirt lengths, leotard styling and costume applications designs flourished from then on.



69A

1979 Dance Dress debut

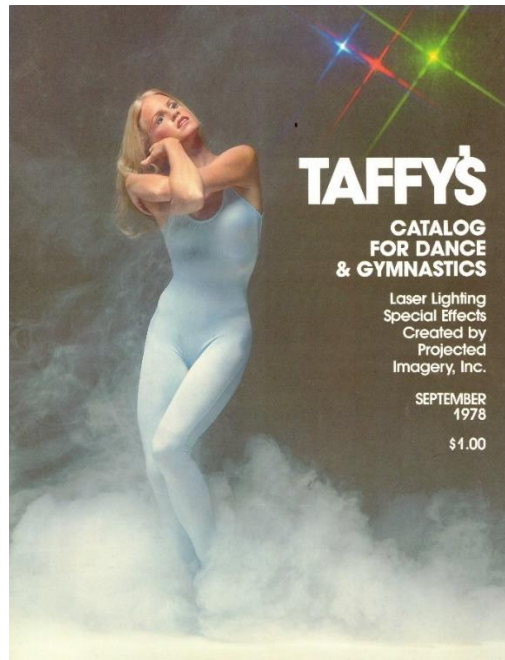
In 1978 Laser Light Shows paired with rock music were all the rage. Taffy's hired Projected Imagery to provide laser images. King built a set for the dancers and the laser equipment and used a fog machine to create an atmosphere that enhanced the laser lights. Catalog magic.



Boston, MA

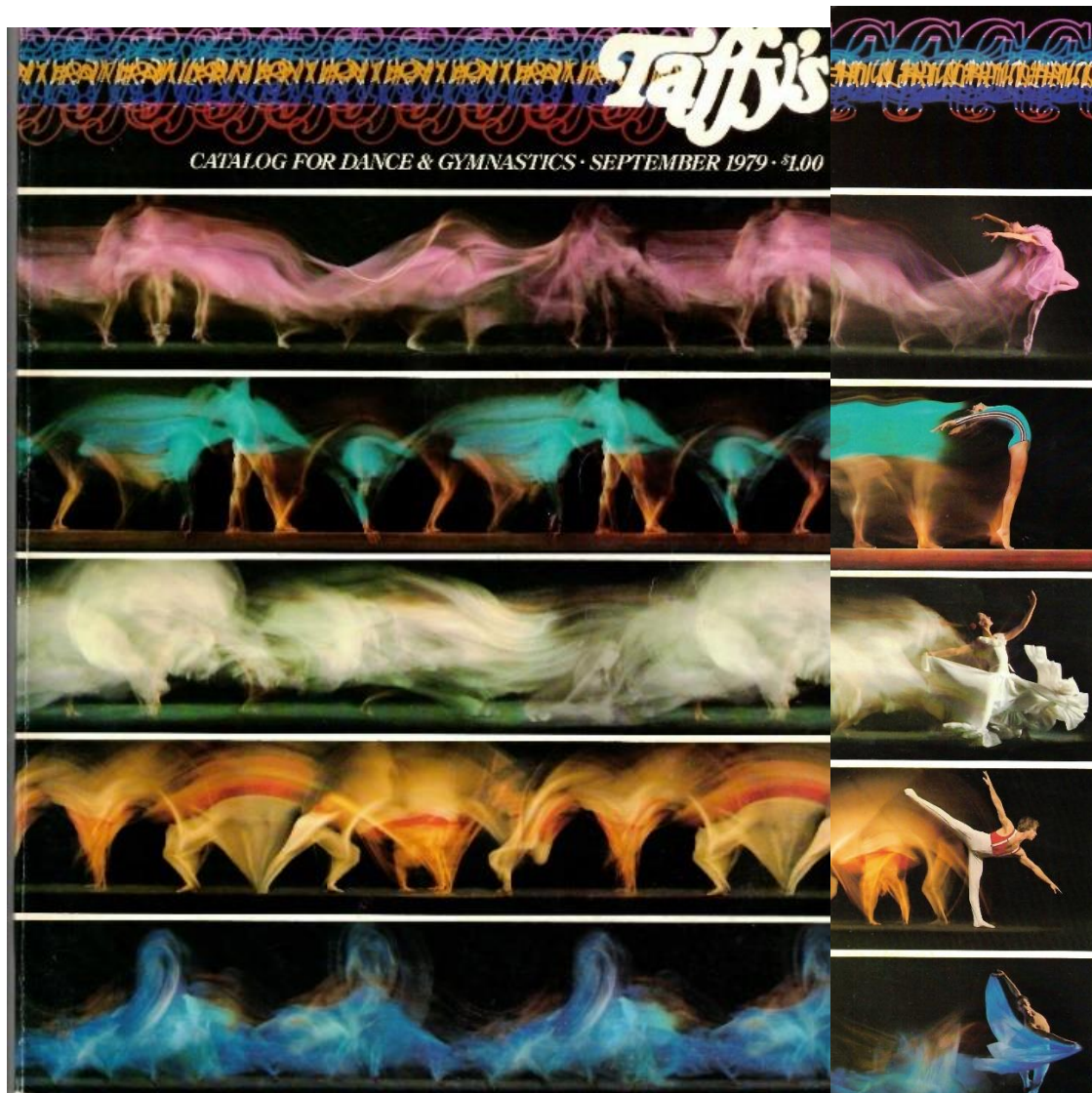


Shaker Heights, OH



1978 Taffy's catalog with Laser Lights

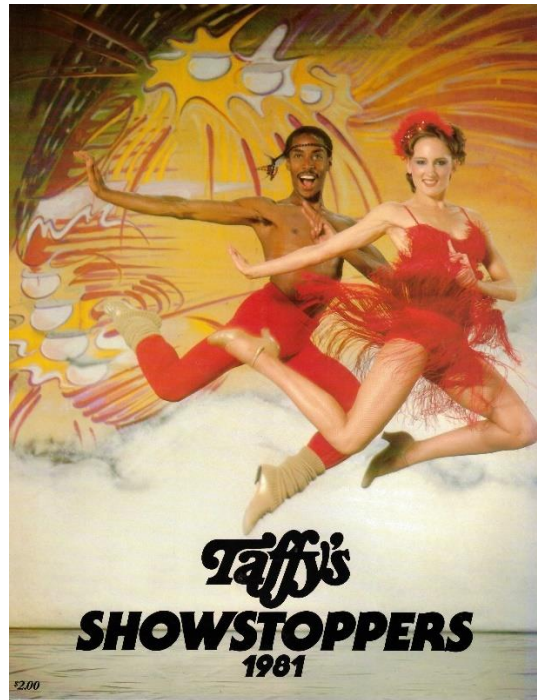
In 1979 King had an idea to create a catalog using a technique he called blur freeze. He created a black seamless cyc. I choreographed a repeatable movement phrase that moved from stage left to right. King was at the camera and kept the shutter opened as the dancer moved across the stage. When the body got to a designated place I pressed the button that fired the strobe and took the still photo. The images we created were stunning. The resulting images are a perfect example of the language of dance shared by the dancer, the photographer and the director.



1979 Taffy's Blur Freeze catalog

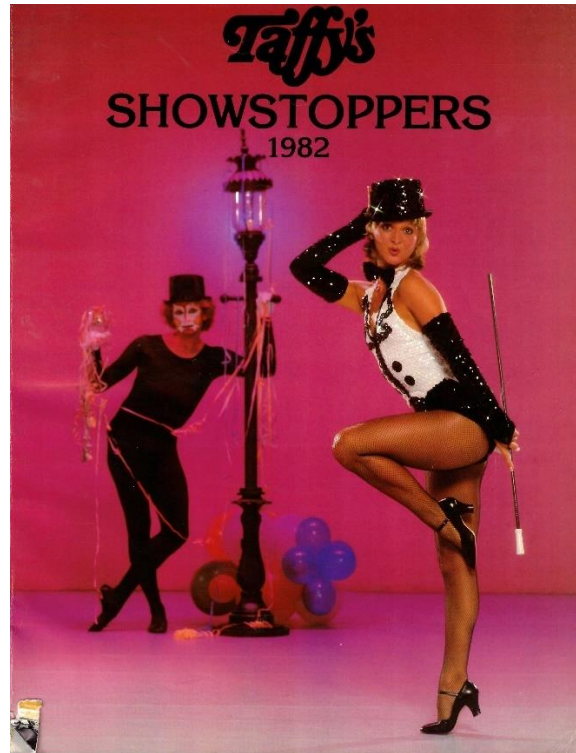


The costume catalogs also benefitted from the creative collaboration of King, Judy and me



Painted Backdrops behind every dancer – setting the moods and not just a white boring backgrounds





Playful mimes- throughout the sections – adding a story telling dimension



Through the years Taffy's catalogs won awards and notoriety:

CREATING A CATALOG THAT SELLS

Because of them, 30 percent of America's consumer population spent over \$50 billion last year. Yet they have been around since the 15th century. They are catalogs, and they have gone from those first rudimentary listings of sale books to thick, glossy presentations that are often slick enough to be displayed on a coffee table.

Most people attribute the origins of today's mail-order catalog to A.

by Susan Sachs

Montgomery Ward, who put out a one-page flier in 1872 offering handkerchiefs, tablecloths, and coats at below-retail prices. A few years later, the catalog grew to eight pages. The 1985 Spring-Summer Montgomery Ward catalog contained 376 four-color pages that included photographs of each item along with com-

plete product information and pricing. Other catalogs, like the one put out by Royal Silk, which sells mid-priced silk apparel, began their lives as unassuming space advertisements, only to expand to mail order and, increasingly, retail outlets.

Like both Montgomery Ward and Royal Silk, the entire catalog field has grown up incredibly. Today it is possible for a consumer to complete virtually all of his or her shopping with-



The cover of your catalog is crucial. The best manage to convey a distinct image of the company and the items inside. They are irresistible invitations to the reader to peek inside, luxuriate over, and buy.

ENTREPRENEUR, FEBRUARY 1987 • 79

1987 article in Entrepreneur Magazine

Changing trends and societal influences of the 70's and 80's

It is impossible to leave the 70's without talking about *A Chorus Line*, the Broadway musical that debuted in 1975. Set on a bare stage, it is the story of the universal trials and tribulations of life, through the personal stories of dancers auditioning for a job. Costumed in simple practice wear, *A Chorus Line* has resonated with the public for years and was instrumental in a renewed interest in all things dance and dancewear. The dance look was also now the street look.

There weren't many dance movies in the 80's, but few got as much attention as *Flash Dance* (1983) and *Dirty Dancing* (1987). Both films used dance as the vehicle to tell a more universal story. And both films featured simple costumes were sought after commercially.



The camisole dance dress that was worn by Jennifer Gray on the *Dirty Dancing* movie poster is shown here with pointe shoes. The drop shoulder sweat shirt became the iconic look of *Flash Dance*. Both available at Taffy's.

The late 1970's into the early 1980's the dance world exploded. The rise of modern dance opened up a world of artistic expression, stressing simplicity and freedom of movement. Costumes broke away from the traditional norms and became sleeker and more form fitting, reflecting the story, theme and emotions of the choreography and creating visually striking images. Unisex Garments were more gender fluid. The creation of performance fabrics and fabrications reflected manufacturing capabilities exploding.

Modern Artists like Noguchi Matisse, Picasso and Miro designed dance costumes. Martha Graham famously employed Halston as a costume designer as early as 1973. In the 70's these designs were inspiration for commercially costumes.



1980 Nickolai and Graham influenced dance sacks made from matte Lycra



Color blocking and unisex garments reflecting the influence of Modern Dance and societal changes

Dance competitions and conventions were growing at an astonishing rate. Contemporary and Lyrical dance genres were emerging. Ballet choreography broke through the classical norms beyond tutus, setting down the seeds for both established and emerging, choreographers and companies to expand their vocabularies. The ballerina was no longer about the Sylph, the Willie, the floating feminine icon. She no longer had to dance vertically and delicately on pointe. Movements could be off balance expressing a different kind of fluidity not seen in ballet before. This actually began with Balanchine's 1941 *Concerto Barroco*, a plotless neo-classic ballet costumed in simple white skirted leotards. As with most things, it took into the 70's and 80's to filter down to commercially available products. Jerome Robbins carried on this choreographic and movement style in the 50's and 60's. The lines between Modern Dance and Ballet began to blur. Dances often were performed in soft ballets, jazz shoes or even barefoot. Dance makers like William Forsythe, Twyla Tharp, Arthur Mitchell, Alvin Ailey and Bob Joffrey began to experiment with dance, movement and music, laying the foundation for future choreographers and companies like Christopher Wheeldon, Jiri Kylian, Ballet X, Body Traffic, Cedar Lake, The Gibney Company and Complexions.

Let's get to the pointe:

Capezio® has 8 different toe shoes

in more than 100 sizes.

No one, but no one, has

more toe shoe styles,

designed to answer the specific

needs of a dancer.

Capezio's been dancing since 1887.* Ballet Makers, Inc. One Campus Road, Totowa, NJ 07512



POINTE SHOES

CAPEZIO

Note: Shank strength is rated from #1 to #5. The higher the number, the stronger the shank. #1, #2, and #3 are standard. #4 and #5 are "special order."

CAP 172 Capezio Ultimo. Capezio's all satin pointe shoe with broad toe, flatter shape. Equal in strength to Nicolini. Made with a #2 shank. For advanced and professional dancers.

Sizes: 1-7 (B,C,D), 1-6 1/2 (E,EE). \$33.50

CAP 175 Capezio Contempora. Capezio's pointe shoe with extra broad, square, hand pleated toe. Made with a #2 shank.

Sizes: 1-7 (B,C,D), 1-6 1/2 (E,EE). \$33.50

CAP 176 Capezio Euro-Pink Contempora. Capezio favorite in European pink satin for matching European pointe shoes. Made with a #2 shank.

Sizes: 1-7 (B,C,D), 1-6 1/2 (E,EE). \$33.50

CAP 183 Capezio Infinita. Capezio's star performer with all the features desired by contemporary ballet dancers: European pink satin, broader box, flat balancing surface and comfortable fit. Made with a special shank designed just for this shoe, it is very flexible. Sizes: 1-7 (B,C,D), 1-6 1/2 (E,EE). \$35.50

CAP 185 Capezio Perfetta. Capezio's professional pointe shoe in European pink satin with a three-quarter shank, making it softer, lighter, and less constructed. Provides a beautiful arch and broad balancing surface. It is preferred by dancers who do not need the extra support provided by a full shank. Elastic drawstring and buffed and scored sole are other advantageous features.

Sizes: 2-6 1/2 (B,C,D,E,EE). \$35.50

CAP D105 Capezio Duro Toe. Capezio's suede-tipped pointe shoe for longer wear. Ideal for students. Made with a #3 shank and re-inforced box.

Sizes: 12-8 (B,C,D), 12-6 1/2 (E). \$29.50

CAP P103 Capezio Pavlowa. Capezio's student pointe shoe with low vamp. Made with a #3 shank and a re-inforced box. All satin.

Sizes: 1-8 (A), 12-8 (B,C,D), 12-6 1/2 (E), 1-6 1/2 (EE). \$31.50

CAP N155 Capezio Nicolini. Capezio's all satin shoe for the advanced student and professional. Made with a #2 shank.

Sizes: 1-8 (A), 12-8 (B,C,D), 12-6 1/2 (E), 1-6 1/2 (EE). \$33.50

CAP 55X Capezio Assoluta. Special Make Up To Order Only. Capezio's all satin, lightweight, performance pointe shoe. Made with a #1 flexible shank and a lighter box.

Sizes: 1-9 (A), 1-9 1/2 (B), 1-11 (C,D,E), 1-7 1/2 (EE). \$39.50

IMPORTED

BLO S0131 Bloch Serenade. The ultimate, lightweight pointe shoe with a wide, silent toe platform and low profile arch for improved lateral balance. (Wider and flatter box.) Made in Australia, using only natural materials. Full and half sizes 1-6 (B,C,D). Pink satin with non bulky drawstring. Allow eight weeks for delivery. \$42.00

BLO S0132 Bloch Suprima. A sublime, soft winged, tapered box, more narrow, professional shoe for the advanced dancer. Made in Australia, using only natural materials. Full and half sizes. Pink satin with non bulky drawstring. Allow eight weeks for delivery. Sizes: 1-6 (B,C,D). \$42.00

FBT 102 Freed Satin Pointe. Imported, all satin English pointe shoe with sturdy arch, excellent fit. Comes in "regular" or "deep" vamp. Please specify which you are ordering.

Sizes: 1—9 (M,X), 2-9 (XX), 3-8 (XXX). \$42.00

The New Gamba 87. Made with broad platform for stability, shorter side and box (made with the new Gamba paste) which still fully protects the toe joints, and a full shank in the new fibre which conforms beautifully to the foot. V-shaped vamp holds the arch firmly against the shoe. Made in England by Gamba, Ltd. Sizes: 1-8 (NN,N,M,X,XX,XXX). \$39.95

TURP-C Canvas Turning Pointe. Created to meet the demand of professional dancers this canvas pointe with 3/4 shank in a natural fibre that does not fall apart when wet keeps the foot cool and has the unique property of remaining stiff or flexing as required! Broad platform provides stability, v-shaped vamp holds the arch against the shank. Gamba's special paste allows you to steam and shape the box without losing the support of the shoe as it will re-harden automatically. Very quiet on stage. Made in England by Gamba, Ltd. Sizes: 1-8 (NN,N,M,W,XW). \$42.00

TURP-S Satin Turning Pointe. Created to meet the demand of professional dancers this satin pointe with 3/4 shank in a natural fibre that does not fall apart when wet keeps the foot cool and has the unique property of remaining stiff or flexing as required! Broad platform provides stability, v-shaped vamp holds the arch against the shank. Gamba's special paste allows you to steam and shape the box without losing the support of the shoe as it will re-harden automatically. Very quiet on stage. Made in England by Gamba, Ltd. Sizes: 1-8 (NN,N,M,W,XW). \$42.00

SPECIAL ORDER SHOES

All pointe shoes are in stock in pink only. For Black or White, or for individual specifications, allow 8-16 weeks. There is an additional \$10.00 charge, per pair, for shoes that are "SPECIAL ORDER." Special order shoes must be prepaid and are not accepted for return or exchange. Minimum Order of Three pairs required.

ACCESSORIES

Gamba Block Toe Shaper. Preserve your shoes by using these shapers between wearings. Pair \$10.00

Gamba Timestep Pointe Shoe Hardener. Stretch the life of your pointes by using this hardening mixture from Gamba. \$8.00/bottle.

Gamba Timestep Ballet Socks. From Gamba, a specially woven sock in "tights" nylon. Designed for comfort and long wear. Adds support to the ankle. In Ballet pink or White. \$4.00/pair.

TSC Capezio's Toe Shoe Covers. White knitted polyester with suede toe and elasticized top. Order by shoe size. Sizes 1-8 (whole sizes only). \$4.50

GK 60 Rock Rosin. High grade rosin for dance and gymnastics on wooden floors. Packaged in one-pound bags. \$4.25/lb.

PR1 Powdered Rosin. 4.5 oz shaker. \$4.50

PADDING

FRP. Foam Rubber Pads to cushion your toes and absorb the friction. S.M.L. \$3.00

LWPI. Lambswool Pads, S.M.L. \$2.50

LWL. Lambswool (1 oz.) \$2.50

RIBBON

Imported Ribbon.

FR 78H. English Pink nylon 7/8" ribbon. 2 1/2 yards for one pair of shoes. \$2.50

FR 78. English Pink nylon 7/8" ribbon. 50 yard roll. \$42.00

FR 1H. English pink nylon 1" ribbon. 2 1/2 yards for one pair of shoes. \$3.50

FR 1. English pink nylon 1" ribbon. 50 yard roll. \$68.00

Domestic Ribbon.

R58H. Hank of 5/8" Pink Ribbon (2 1/2 yd.). \$1.50

R58B. Bolt (100 yards) of 5/8" Pink Ribbon. \$36.00

R34H. Hank of 3/4" Pink Ribbon (2 1/2 yd.). \$1.50

R34B. Bolt (100 yards) of 3/4" Pink Ribbon. \$39.00

Elastic (Pink only).

E 38. 3/8" wide Elastic .20/yd

E 58. 5/8" wide Elastic .25/yd

E 78. 7/8" wide Elastic .30/yd

THE COBBLERS CORNER... BECAUSE WE CARE.

For information about the care of pointe shoes, repair products and services, and special customizing of pointe shoes, please write to "The Cobbler," Cobbler's Corner at Taffy's Manhattan, 1776 Broadway (2nd Floor), New York, New York 10019

**24-HOUR
MESSAGE SERVICE
216-461-3360**

TAFFY'S-BY-MAIL 5

1986 Pointe Shoe offerings at Taffy's

Note: The different shoe descriptions emphasizing the different shoe qualities

Also: note the Cobbler's Corner: The NY Store had the ability to repair, renovate and change toe shoes for dancers

Tap Dance experienced a renewed interest in studios and competitions. With roots in Black American jazz and music, thanks in part to the *Copasetics*, hoofers from the 1950's that helped to fuel this movement, Rhythm Tap, surfaced on Broadway: *Bubbling Brown Sugar* (1976), *Tap Dance Kid* (1983) and *Black and Blue* (1989), and in the movies *Tap* (1989) and *White Nights* (1985). Rhythm tap, a tap style that is very percussive and includes improvisation much like jazz music, brought us choreographic pioneers that include Diannne Walker and Brenda Buffalino, the forerunners of Michelle Dorrance, Ayodele Casel and Dormeshia, and highly influenced Billy Siegenfeld, a former drummer, and his Jump Rhythm technique.

Traditional womens tap shoes were high heels, great for Broadway style dancing, but Rhythm Tap needed a shoe more like the men wore, a shoe that let them execute the moves with precision. Responding to this need, Women's tap oxfords or jazz/tap shoes came on the market.



It was during this time Bloch made its name in America. Bloch was a well-established brand in Australia. Like Capezio, Bloch was started in 1932 in Sydney Australia. Joseph Bloch made custom ballet shoes in a small workshop located above his retail store. Taffy became friends with the Wilkenfeld family (Betty Bloch, daughter of Joseph married into the Wilkenfeld family) and became the first company to offer the Bloch products. It started with just one style of ballet shoes, but in 1984 Bloch created the first split-sole product, a jazz shoe. Dance shoes would never be the same. Split sole ballet shoes, point shoes, tap shoes all had their beginnings in the Bloch jazz shoe. Originally only available at Taffy's.

The ultimate jazz shoe

Unique construction allows greater foot to floor sensitivity.

Ultra flexible, soft wrap around leather molds to arch when pointing.

Lightweight heel with built-in shock absorbing cushion.

Padded toe conforms to exact shape of foot.

Reinforced uppers for reliable fit control.

Stacked leather inside for firmer grip.

Fully lined in cotton for natural breathing and absorbency.

Available in white leather, black leather or grey suede.

Ultraflex by Bloch's. The perfect jazz shoe, made in Australia.

Our new, lightweight jazz shoe, as with all our dance shoes, is the result of extensive work with professional dancers. We've designed it to move more closely and comfortably with your foot. Our unique construction allows you to really point, and ensures ultimate dancing precision. And our specially developed, soft, natural leathers are very flexible yet strong enough for the toughest work ahead. You don't cut corners when you dance. So we haven't when making the ultimate jazz shoe. **ULTRAFLEX.**

BLOCH'S
AUSTRALIA

TO TAFFY'S BY MAIL.

In 1986 Taffy's imported jazz boots from Pineapple in London. Available in a rainbow of colors, they were the new “must have” shoes only available at Taffy's

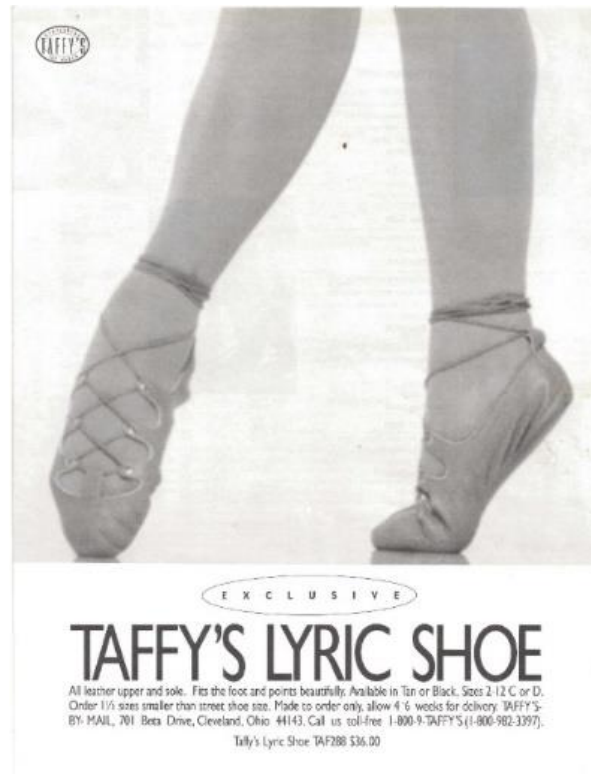


Taffy's now offered over a dozen different dance dresses. Most were photographed with pointe shoes or bare feet. Because of the demands of these emerging dance styles, Taffy's revived a shoe that had been in the Capezio line for years: the Hermes sandal. Sales exploded so quickly that Capezio called Taffy to find out what created this boom in sales for such an established product that had been available for eons.



But the sandal was stiff and difficult to point. We needed a neutral-colored shoe, that wasn't a ballet shoe, that would look good with a dance dress -- but performed like a ballet shoe. The Highland Ghille seemed like the perfect solution, but it only came in black. We enlisted the help of the custom shoe department at Capezio. Capezio Theatrical created the tan Ghille, the perfect shoe for the emerging Lyrical dance genre.

Eventually Capezio brought the shoe into their line, and even made a split sole version.

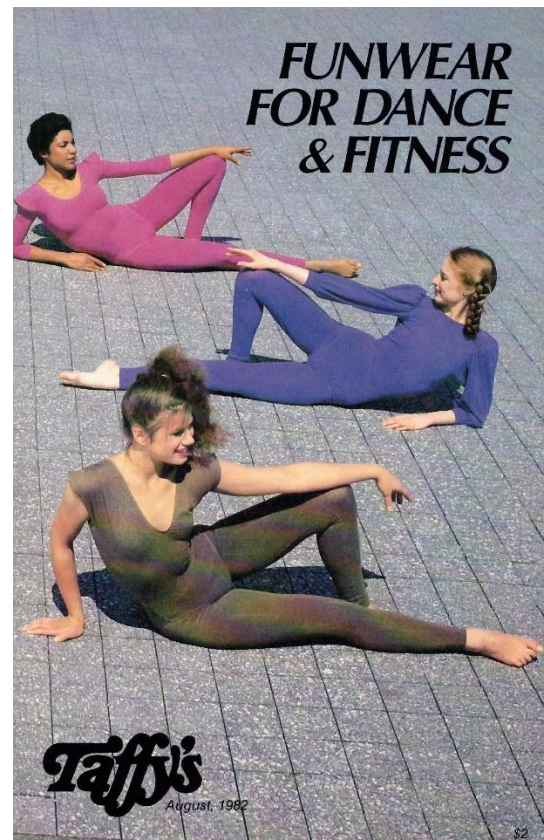
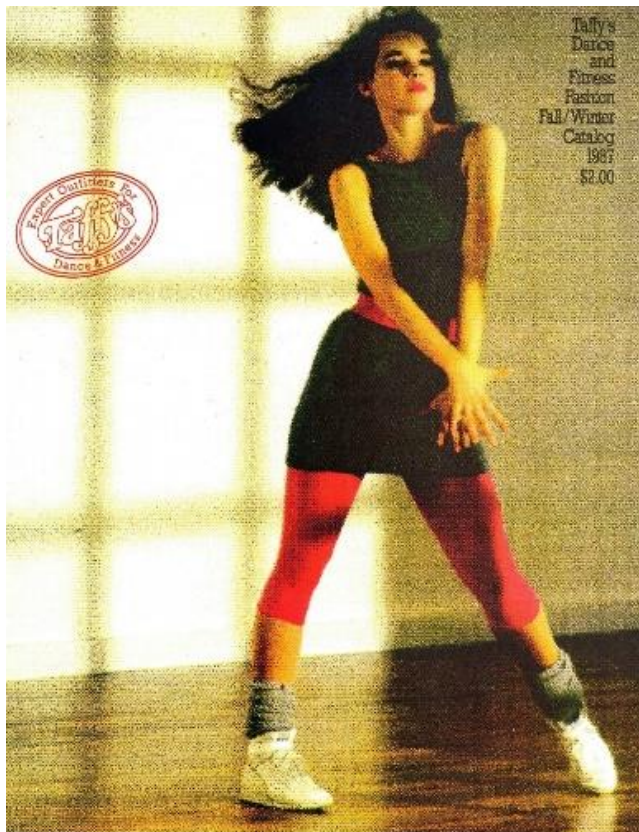


New products and companies flooded the marketplace. Cotton bodywear added a new dimension to design options, combining the fit properties of Lycra with the comfort and matte finish of cotton. Cotton was also viewed as a healthier alternative to nylon fabrications. Capezio, Flexatard, Premiere Bodywear and Mirella were leaders in creating classic cotton leotards and unitards featuring form-flattering seams and low backs in soft cotton colors.

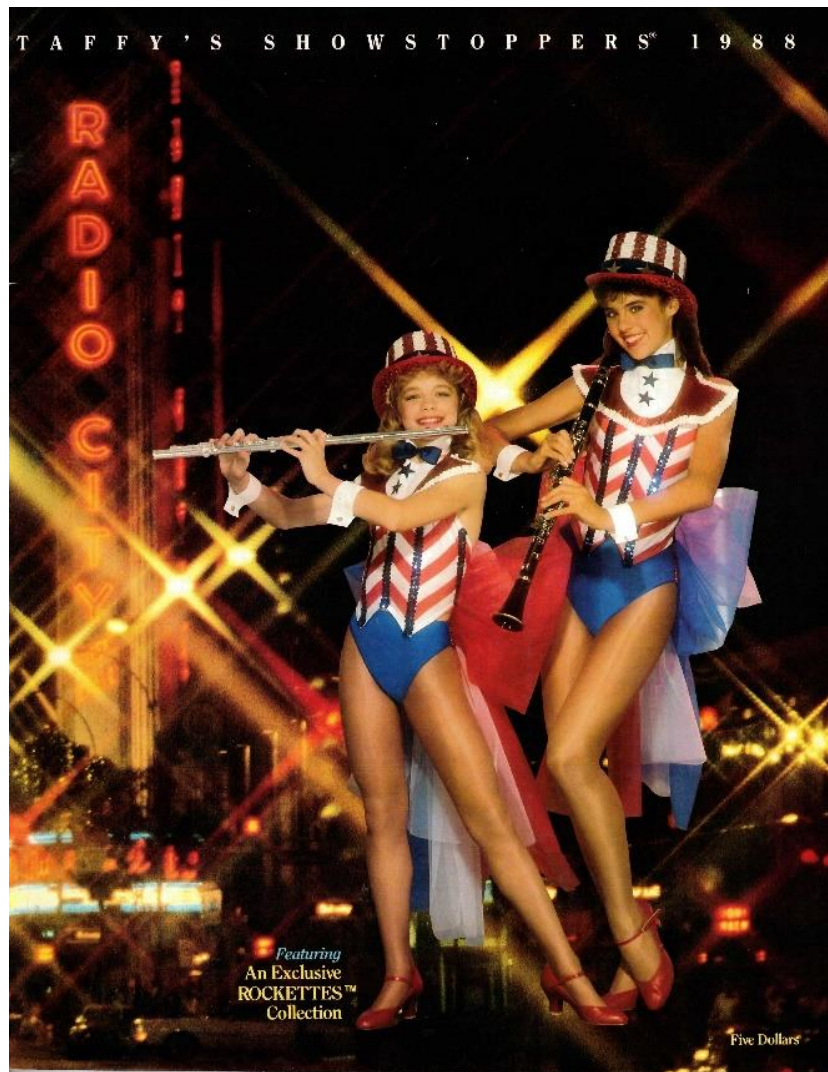
These companies and products were often designed by dancers and former dancers responding to demands from their own experiences, companies like Mirella, designed by dancer Marilyn Burbank, Bun Heads was designed by a former ballerina and Gaynor Minden Pointe Shoes are designed by former dancer Eliza Gaynor Minden.

In 1984, after a career as a teacher, choreographer, and performer, I retired from dancing and joined the family business. At first, I managed the New York store, and soon became the buyer and merchandiser for all 14 stores. It was in this role, and with my dance background, that I too was able to source and design innovative and new products for dancers' full time, in addition to assisting with the catalog shoots and working with the photographers product designers and marketing.

Yoga, Pilates, Jane Fonda, Jazzercise and Dance Fitness became household names. Dance studios started offering dance/fitness classes during the day for their moms. Belts, headbands, legwarmers, stiped leotards, cover ups. Dance brands like Capezio, Danskin, Flexatard all got in the game, along with newcomers: Baryshnikov, Marika, Carushka, Dance Basics, Body Wrappers just to name a few. Dancewear, exercise wear and street wear, the lines were once again blurred.



In 1988 Taffy's was approached by the Rockettes to create a Rockette Costume Collection. It was a wonderful opportunity. I was given access to the Rockettes costume collection and their costume shop. The collaboration included creating reproductions of some of their most famous costumes and a contest with a first prize ticket to NYC and Radio City Music Hall. Every costume in the collection came with a Certificate of Authenticity.



1988 Showstoppers Cover



1988 Rockette Collection

The 80's Influences, Buying Habits and Market Forces

Musicians have always influenced mainstream fashion, dance styles and costumes. Soul Train and James Brown were featured in TV variety shows. MTV brought rock stars into our living rooms. The flash and dazzle from stars like Madonna and Michael Jackson created a market for costumes that emulated their style. Mainstream fashion designers look to these icons to create clothing. Creations became easily accessible and available in department and ready-to-wear shops, giving opportunities for dance costume designers to easily source garments and accessories. Although costume companies tried to emulate these looks, and some do so quite successfully, competing on price became a real issue. The only advantage costume companies have is that their designs are available in volume, allowing the purchasers to buy enough of the same or complementary styles for an entire group of dancers.

Following in the lead of Sam's Club and Kosco, a company called Dance Distributors published a dance catalog with products that were highly discounted. Discount Dance Supply quickly followed. Not unlike Taffy's, Discount Dance Supply started out as small, family-owned dance retail shop. But instead of the Taffy's model, they chose to create a brand that "serviced all dancers at every budget." They created a mail-order catalog with discounts as high as 25% off retail. Taffy held firm to her brand, she was the Neiman Marcus of the dance world, and she would not become a Sam's Club. By the end of the 1980's mail-order and brick and mortar dance stores were feeling the effects of not only the discounters, but also the availability of product at department stores and ready-to-wear shops thus further eroding the customer base.

October 19th, 1987 was Black Monday. It was on this day that the stock market crashed and sparked fear of economic instability worldwide. Although Taffy's experience maintained that family budgets would always find money for their kid's activities, extra purchases would fall by the wayside. The Taffy's retail stores suffered a loss in foot traffic, mail order sales diminished. Combined with the pinch of the mail-order discounters, by 1988 most of the Taffy's retail stores had closed, leaving the original 4- Boston, Cleveland, Dallas, Atlanta and the newest store New York City.

The incorporation of Street/Break Dancing and Hip-Hop into studio curriculum and competitions helped to change the buying habits of footwear and bodywear. These dance styles require shoes and garments that are easily purchased from retailers and mail order stores and were not available through the usual dancewear channels. On top of that, the dance manufacturers were and continue to be slow at filling that niche. This was due to a shortfall in manufacturing ability both in fabrications and techniques by costume companies, and because of the lack of in-house designers understanding the genre, but mostly it is because of the near impossibility to compete with mainstream fashion and prices. While most of the costume industry at this time was manufactured in America, most of the garments in the mainstream were manufactured offshore. Fabric, garment, and shoe manufacturing had long left the United States. This trend in manufacturing was about to infiltrate the entire costume industry.

The costume industry is a difficult and unique one. It is highly seasonal, with most of the orders coming in between November and January, and delivery required by Spring. Because you are outfitting classes of young dancers, fulfilling an order to completion is mandatory. Backorders, missing photo dates or recital dates-- as well as disappointing kids-- is all unacceptable and ruinous to the dance studio business. Designs and catalogs for any year need to be completed and photographed well in advance. Securing inventory is often required before orders start coming in, sometimes before the catalog is even mailed. Sales projections are difficult. In 1989 the pressures from the discounters combined with the complexities of the costume industry and a computer failure in-house opened the door for Taffy's to sell to one of our closest suppliers and admirers, Capezio. And so it came to pass that Taffy's was purchased by Capezio in the fall of 1989. Over the next 2 years the Taffy's stores became Capezio stores, the costume business was closed, and the mail-order catalogs stopped. I continued to work for Capezio until 1991 when I left to become a consultant in the industry. It was in this capacity that Taffy's entrepreneurial, risk taking, and creative spirit carried on and I was able to forge ahead and make contributions to the dance world I grew up in and love.

Life after Taffy's

Taffy didn't last working for Capezio and soon left and "retired". That lasted about 6 weeks, and she started to look around for something to do. Volunteering wasn't her thing either. Always a pioneer, Taffy's opened a dinner delivery service (remember, this is 1990 before

Door Dash and COVID) and named it *Dinner is Served*. An odd choice for her, as she had absolutely no interest in food, and was not the greatest eater. She got the idea from a company she read about in Austin, Texas that had started a meal delivery service. It sounded great to her, as she would have used the service herself when she was in business with two kids at home and no time to make dinner. Using her hands on approach, she ran the business for two years and then sold it to finally retire.

After working for Capezio for two years I set out on my own and became a consultant to the industry. Working with Danskin, and relying on my dance background and dancer friends, I was able to revitalize their dance line. In the 50's and 60's the name Danskin was synonymous with the name dance, some people even calling a leotard a Danskin. After many corporate ownership changes Danskin's brand deteriorated. My task was to update and modernize the dance line.

Dancers often cut out the seams in the soles of tights making tights both footed and footless. Under my direction Danskin introduced convertible tights, becoming both footed and footless all in one. But the most notable introduction at Danskin came from a suggestion from my good friend dancer and teacher, Patricia Dickenson, who I met at SMU. During a friendly chat one day Pat asked me why camisole leotards didn't have straps like bras that were adjustable? A light bulb went off! I had been knotting the straps of my leotards for years to make them shorter. Danskin introduced the first adjustable strap camisole. This became a trend that was soon commonplace, and even extended to costumes.

I consulted with Curtain Call and along with their talented designers, photographers and marketers continued the tradition of introducing inspiring designs and motivational catalogs.

In 1992, as president of the United Dance Merchants of America, I realized there was an opportunity to create a trade show for the costume industry, presented by UDMA. The organization's original mission of protecting members exhibiting at conventions was now expected protocol at those events, we needed a new direction to grow and stay viable. Most dance teachers had no idea what UDMA was or cared. Hosting a vendor show wasn't a new idea, Taffy and then President Howard Baccheimer along with original founders and board had often talked about creating an event like that but had never gone through with it. In 1992 the only way teachers could see the costumes in person was at the dance Olympus convention in January in NYC. January was too late, costume orders had to be placed before then and catalogs were never available until December or January. At the time my partner and husband John Hickey was the Production Manager at the Hudson theatre, part of the Macklowe hotel in midtown Manhattan. With his help and the support of the 15 or so UDMA members, we produced the first UDMA Costume Preview Show in November at the Macklowe Hotel. Susan Wershing, then publisher of Dance Teacher Now had an annual supplement named the Costume Preview Edition. She agreed to be a major sponsor and was the force in the marketing of the event. We had hoped for 100 teacher attendees but were presently surprised to see 100 studios and over 300 attendees. We knew we were on to something. John and I produced and directed the shows for the next 20 + years. During that time, we saw UDMA

grow from 15 members to over 100 and hosted 4-6 annual shows across the US. We brought the show to thousands of dance teachers and studio owners. Catalogs now come out in the summer, costume orders placed in the fall, and dance teachers can see touch feel the costumes, preview new products, and be introduced to new business sources, products and services. The show has gone through many name changes to reflect the growing interests of the dance industry. All from our humble beginnings.

In the 90's and early 2000's more social forces have had an impact on the dancewear industry today.

TV once again played a huge role in popularizing dance. Shows like *So You Think You Can Dance*, *America's Got Talent*, and *Dancing With The Stars*, were and continue to be a huge success and they set fire to the industry, spawning huge competitions and conventions and increasing studio enrollment. The demand for bodywear and costumes exploded. Contemporary dance and hip hop are now the two most popular dance forms. Seeing dancers on TV barefoot, barelegged and sometimes wearing socks instead of shoes began a whole new trend that continues today.

Years before the words Equity, Inclusion and Diversity became part of our everyday vernacular, dance shoes and tights became available in a multitude of skin tones, not just suntan and pink. Models in catalogs are now multi racial, of different body types, and reflect the importance of dance for a variety of communities.

And in fashion first the ballet flats and jazz oxfords became streetwear, and then woman started wearing leggings, not just for exercise, but as a wardrobe staple that continues today. Workout wear is also street wear and street wear is often also dancewear. Again, dance influencing fashion, and fashion influencing dance.

While at Capezio, a young energetic salesman named Joe Sclafani worked in the same office as me. Joe went on to become one of the most respected and knowledgeable executives in the industry. He had worked for Flexatard and then Capezio. He also worked for Discount Dance Supply and then Revolution. I spoke to Joe, who retired from the dance business recently. We discussed his views on where dancewear is today.

First of all he told me that tights are out. "No one wears tights anymore. Not in woman's fashion nor for dance. But perhaps the biggest change", he said "is the buying habits of consumers. Once Internet shopping became the norm, discounters dominated the marketplace. At the same time dance studios saw profit opportunities and opened their own, in-house dancewear shops. Venders created buying programs to assist studio owners to purchase inventory and maximize their profits. Today Amazon is the dominant player in the online, dancewear industry. And private dance studios selling dancewear have put many small shops out of business. The dancewear shops that have survived offer exceptional customer service and specialty products."

Costume companies have been forced to move most, if not all, of their production offshore. The demands of offshore buying are challenging, due to high minimum purchases and long lead times. Due to the seasonality of the costume industry this business model is particularly volatile and difficult to manage profitably. Many of the family-owned companies sold to venture capitalists whose only concerns are the bottom line, forsaking customer service for profits. The addition of COVID forced many of these legacy companies to fold, leaving very few costume company resources. Today, there are

Only one of the legacy costume companies from the 50's is still around, Weissman's today. Most of the Conventions and Competition companies are family own and once again, new family-owned businesses are opening up with products and services for dancers. The cycle begins again

Well into her 90's, always the entrepreneur and being a caring person, Taffy started yet again another business. Taffy was in close touch with the children of some of the Taffy's employees. Dr. Karen Jaffe, a daughter of a long time Taffy employee was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease. Taffy was reading an article in Dance Studio Life about Dance for PD (Parkinson's), a program developed by David Levinthal from the Mark Morris Company. Karen danced as a child and was physically very active. Taffy contacted David and through her dance contacts and with Kathryn Karipides help, was able to bring David to Cleveland and hosted a 2-day training workshop for the Dance for PD program. Taffy, along with Karen, Judy and Kathryn formed the Cleveland version of Dance for PD, Yes I Can (!) Dance. Taffy lived to see it integrated into the fitness program at the JCC, and it continues today at In-Motion, an organization dedicated to helping people with Parkinsons.



Yes I Can (!) Dance class 2013 at the JCC

Taffy stands in the back with me watching class. Look for the white tee shirts.

Taffy died soon after this photo was taken

In 2015 I left the consulting world to experience retirement. Like Taffy, this was short lived and soon I grew restless. I wanted to return to my dancing roots and, and help young dancers see career possibilities. I approached my good friend Gina Gibney, who was the Founder, Artistic Director and CEO of a large dance center in NYC, Gibney. Gibney is well-established as one of the centers of Contemporary

Dance in NYC, along with being a Social Justice advocate. “Gibney’s mission is to tap into the vast potential of movement, creativity and performance to effect social change and personal transformation.” I had an idea to create and curate experiences for visiting high schools and University groups at Gibney. Utilizing the vast resources of staff and faculty we could create customized programs combining technique classes, workshops and artists discussions. We launched NYC Group Study in 2016, and I was named the Producing Director. That first year we hosted seven groups. Today the program is the Learning and Leadership Group Program, we host about thirty high schools and universities groups annually, both in NYC and with onsite campus visits. I am rewarded giving back to the industry I love and helping young artists see pathways to their future.

Taffy’s entrepreneurial spirit lives on.

A toast to the women pioneers



Taffy, Rita and Judy in 2007

Special Thanks: A heartfelt thanks goes to Kathryn Karipides, friend, mentor, adviser, and saint. Although Kathryn never worked for Taffy's her guidance was and continues to be invaluable. K2 (as we fondly call her) was/is always available to Taffy and me. Her ability to listen, assess, consult and add clarity to often complex situations is remarkable. A true friend, along with Taffy, Judy, and Rita, these are the women who are the strength behind the story.

More Special Thanks (In no particular order):, Rita Ford, Judith Diehl, King Douglas, Tighe King, Joe Sclafani, Patty Delaney, Joyce Pennington, Patricia Cohen, Susan Gingrasso, Maria Di Dia, Dan Epstein, Lee Kalish, Gina Gibney, Amy Miller, Nancy Allison, Roger Rosen, Yva Momatiuk, John Eastcott and most importantly, John Hickey.

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