

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Dancer's stunt lands in movies

By Mary Jane Doerr special writer

TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD old tap dancer Bill Anagnos made a video of himself a few years ago. It shows him running up the side of the wall at his parents' home in Birmingham and doing a back flip dressed in a suit and tie.

Last April, Nick Castle, director and writer of a soon-to-be-released film, "Tap" with Sammy Davis Jr. and Gregory Hines, saw the video. He wanted that trick in his film. At midnight they called Anagnos at his Los Angeles home and told him to be at Universal Studios the next morning to start rehearsals.

"That stunt has taken me a long ways," Anagnos said with a smile, over dinner at a local restaurant while he was home for the holidays. "I remember the first time I ever did it was on the west wall of the old Will-O-Way Theatre. I was choreographing the production of 'West Side Story' and dancing the part of Bernardo."

In the film "Tap," which is due to be released in early February, during a free form street dance in New York, the camera focuses in on Anagnos as he runs up the side of a building.

"IT IS HARD to describe the stylings when you are making a film," explained Anagnos. "They film all out of sequence."

Basically the story takes place in New York City and centers around a tap dancer Max Washington (Gregory Hines) who is now in prison. Washington's father had been considered the greatest of all hoofers, a Bill "Bojangles" Robinson figure. Big Mo (Sammy Davis, Jr.) tries to get him interested in dancing again. Anagnos is one of 10 featured dancers throughout the film.

"You can spend your whole life waiting for the right opportunity to come around," said Anagnos, who is dressed in a suit and staying in condition eating a salad. "I am writing my own vehicle for success. I have



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

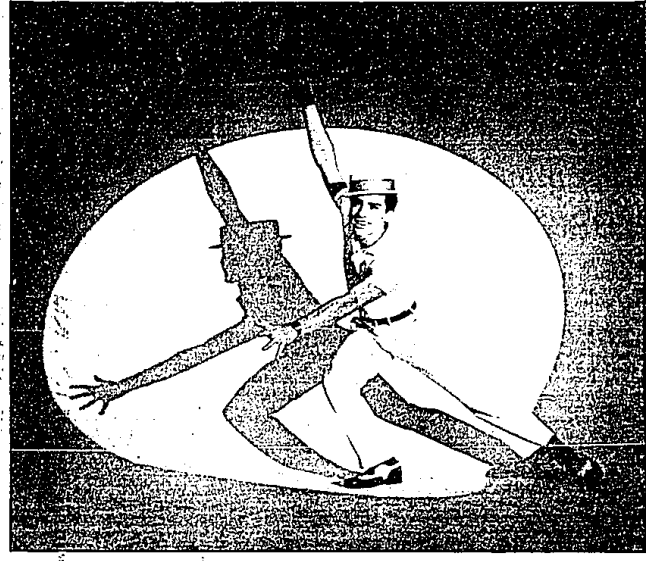
Dancer Bill Anagnos of Birmingham will soon be appearing in the movie "Tap."

written a screenplay for myself which I am now in the process of marketing."

In the film "Tap," a famous tap dancer, the now 66-year-old Harold Nicholas, is featured doing the splits. Anagnos has become a personal friend of Nicholas' 74 year-old

brother, Fayard, and it is for Fayard that Anagnos has written his first script, "Keep Dancing, Kid." A secondary role was written for himself.

With the careful, anticipatory success scheme that seems to mark his life and personality, Anagnos has managed to place the script in the



Bad weather conditions prevented Anagnos from demonstrating his run-up-the-wall trick when he was home visiting his parents recently. This publicity photo reveals some of his razzle-dazzle.

hands of no less than six director/producers — Ted Lang ("Love Boat"), Debbie Allen ("Fame"), Jack Haley (Nicholas' son), Nick Castle ("Tap"), Telly Savalas, and Sylvester Stallone. Anagnos does not need a literary agent.

"I HAVE ONE ambition — to bring back the fitness and class of the musical movies of the 1930s and '40s," Anagnos said. "I want to have the audience leave the theater happy. Perhaps I am a bit old-fashioned, but I don't think Gene Kelly needed a nude scene to make him sexy. You can achieve a greater effect leaving more to the imagination."

Anagnos has been dancing since he was 2 but while he was in school at Way Elementary and Lahser High he played sports. It was not masculine to tap dance, or so he and his friends

thought. When he was 16, he began dancing with his sister Elaine at the Bouzouki Lounge in Greektown and at Greek festivals around Detroit. With his typical confidence and optimism, he made his way on to "PM Magazine" and "Kelly & Company" at 18 and 19. In his two years at Wayne State University, Anagnos was a theater arts major but dropped out to help his father run their Kelly's Cafe in Pontiac.

"Did I ever learn a lot during those two years," remarked Anagnos. "I don't know. I wanted to pursue a career and school in Los Angeles. His restaurant experience paid off for two years as a waiter for a Greek restaurant in L.A. The one hitch was that customers found out about his back flips off the wall and came in to see for themselves.

"This stunt may be my curse," Anagnos said. "I had to do that stunt sometimes three times a night for nearly two years."

Last year Anagnos got his first

break in a national Michelob Lite commercial. In April, though, he quit his restaurant life and became a full-time dancer and actor. Now during the day he trains to keep himself in shape and works on his writing. He spends his evenings reading literature and biographies that will be useful in his new career.

"LAUREN BACALL once said, 'I owe my audience only one thing — good performance,'" Anagnos said. "I don't believe that. I guess it was the way I was raised. I am in the business of meeting people."

Anagnos' big dream is to see himself in a film at the Showcase Cinema where he used to go when he was in high school. He has to return to Los Angeles before "Tap" is scheduled for release.

Perhaps while there he will catch his next film, "The Purple People Eater" with Ned Beatty and Shelley Long. It is due to be released in April of 1989. He does a Fred Astaire dance routine.

upcoming things to do

● **FILM SERIES**
"A Legacy of Laughter" is the theme of the seventh annual Adat Shalom Jewish Film Series at 7 p.m. Sundays, Jan. 8, 15 and 22, at the synagogue in Farmington Hills. The series, highlighting Jewish humor in the movies, will feature showings of "The Frisco Kid," "The Producers" and "Play It Again, Sam" with commentary from Dan Greenberg, film critic and professor of film. Greenberg teaches film at Oakland Community College and writes a weekly column for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. He also appears on "Arts in Review," a weekly OCC-TV production telecast on all Oakland County Cable Systems. The Adat Shalom Synagogue film series is

open to the community without charge. For further information, call 851-5100.

● **CASTING CALL**
First Theater Guild will hold auditions for a children's version of "H.M.S. Pinafore" 7-9 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, Jan. 9-10, at the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham. For more information, call Diane Schachterle at 540-6949.

● **CINEMA GROUP**
"Film Close-up" is the name of a new group meeting, open to filmmakers, who attend area cinema together at special rates, then repair to a central location for a one-hour critique on the art of film viewed.

the sets, costumes, lighting, music, editing and directing, as well as interpretation of the script and the quality of performance. First meeting is 7-10 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10, at the Southfield Art Center. Fee is \$15 for six weeks, plus five theater tickets. Registration is at the Southfield Parks and Recreation Building, 28000 Evergreen.

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