

# Mr. Bojangles

Words & Music by Jerry Jeff Walker © 1968 all rights reserved



## *History*

"**Mr. Bojangles**" is the title of a song originally written and recorded by American country music artist Jerry Jeff Walker for his 1968 album of the same title.

Walker has said he was inspired to write the song after an encounter with a street performer in a New Orleans jail and that the song does not refer to the famous stage and movie personality Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Bojangles' wasn't so much a name as a category of itinerant street entertainer known back as far as the previous century. Walker said while in jail for public intoxication in 1965, he met a homeless white man who called himself "Mr. Bojangles" to conceal his true identity from the police. He had been arrested as part of a police sweep of indigent people that was carried out following a high-profile murder. The two men and others in the cell chatted about all manner of things, but when Mr. Bojangles told a story about his dog, the mood in the room turned heavy. Someone else in the cell asked for something to lighten the mood, and Mr. Bojangles obliged with a tap dance. Jerry Jeff has told this story in a number of different ways over the years, so don't hold me to any of this.

The song is in two time signatures, 3/4 and 6/8 or perhaps 6/9.

*Wikipedia and [www.songfacts.com/](http://www.songfacts.com/)*

*Songs as you go*

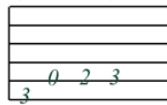
*C walk down* - - - - - >

I knew a man Bojangles and he'd dance for you,

*F* *G6 walk up notes* *G A# B C*

In worn out shoes.

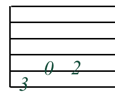
*C walk down*



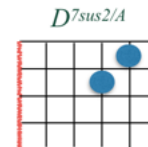
With silver hair, a ragged shirt, and baggy pants,

*F* *G6 walk up notes* *G A# B*

The old soft shoe.



*F* *Em* *Am D7sus2 D7* *G G7*  
He jumped so high, jumped so high then he lightly touched down.



I met him in a cell in New Orleans I was,

Down and out.

He looked to me to be the eyes of age, he was,

As he spoke right out.

He talked of life, laughed of life, clicked his heels and stepped.

He said his name "Bojangles" and he danced a lick,

Across the cell.

He grabbed his pants, and spread his stance, he jumped so high,

And clicked his heels.

He let go a laugh, let go a laugh, shook his clothes all around.

### CHORUS

*Am G Am G*

Mr. Bojangles, Mr. Bojangles,

*Am G C walk down*

Mr. Bojangles dance.

He danced for those at minstrel shows and county fairs, throughout the south.

He spoke through tears of 15 years how his dog and him, traveled about.

The dog up and died, he up and died. After 20 years he still grieves.

He said I dance at every chance in honky tonks, for drinks and tips.

But most the time I spend behind these county bars 'cause I drinks a bit.

He shook his head, he shook his head, heard someone ask him please,

Please.

### CHORUS

*Songs as you go*