

# The University dance troupe: Not the same old song and dance

The piano plays "In the Mood" and nineteen pairs of feet tap, hop and shuffle across the floor in the music building classroom.

"I'm missing that over-all feeling of electricity," says Jean Robinson, the choreographer. "You've got to make the audience feel there's nothing you'd rather do. Let's take from bop-a-do-wop."

Intensity sits heavy in the air and patience dominates Robinson's voice in the rehearsal for the University's Song and Dance Troupe.

The troupe, which began this term is a first for the University in many ways, says Steve Stone, the group's

co-advisor and the assistant dean of the music school. The course, offered jointly through the music school and dance department, provides practical experience for talented students interested in musical theatre.

But at the same time the dance troupe provides the University with a versatile group of entertainers eager for an audience. And the University is happy to oblige. "We are a service organization for the University," Stone says.

The group has performed during New Student Week at the Parents Weekend assembly and at a Halloween dance for the group Oregon Advocates for the Arts.

Members of the troupe were selected for their singing, dancing and music-reading abilities. They are musicians, choreographers, composers and directors, with a repertoire ranging from Broadway show tunes to vocal jazz.

Although Stone and Janet Descutner, assistant professor of dance, are the advisors, most of the work is done by the students, says Stone.

"We are student-based and self-run" says Charlie Bach, a sophomore and tenor soloist for the troupe. Students decide choreography, piano accompaniment, rehearsal direction and performance staging.

Music selection and constructive criticism are "collective agreements," Descutner says.

Members say the group's strength is its cohesion. "We expect everybody to be an individual and hold their own," says the group's pianist John Mansfield.

In addition to three hours of rehearsal each week the group usually meets on weekends, holds meetings and expects members to learn the music and steps on their own time.

No complaints are heard regarding the scant one



Choreographer Jean Robinson calls out instructions.

credit earned by the students. "We do it for no credit," says Susan Fleck.

Performances by other University groups—such as the University Theatre's "Bent"—can be very depressing, Robinson says. "I like to do happy things," she adds.

Funding for the troupe's expenses still is an unsettled issue, Stone says, adding that money is "no strain." The music being used is either from the school's stock or is adapted by students from sheet music. Travel expenses are covered by admission fees and the dancers have purchased their own costumes.

"We're hoping outside sources will help pay them back," Descutner says. "Some of the men have invested up to \$60."

The first goal for the troupe is to build its repertoire into two or three hours' worth of material, Bach says. "But since we're constantly performing rehearsals it makes it harder to add new things," he says.

"We are the newest performance group on campus," Bach adds. "We still need to learn the roles each member can take, and what music needs will evolve."

Story by Diane Winocur  
Photos by David Corey



Marcee Shriver plays the vamp.



Johnathan Mansfield and Sue Fleck of the newly-formed University Song and Dance Troupe dance a duet.

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