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Performance features dancers of all ages, music of every era

From the stage wings one could hear the patter of metal heels and toes, kids whispering and giggling, and an occasional "Shhh!" as Eugene's Musical Feet presented "Off Broadway — a hooper's dream," its annual tap dance show/recital, this past weekend at the Hult Center's Soreng Theatre.

The show, produced and directed by Jeanette Frame, was a romp through some 20 pieces, covering such musical styles as 40s big band jazz, traditional, bluegrass, classical and blues, and featuring dancers ranging in age from six to 60.

"Off Broadway" opened and closed with all 47 of Musical Feet's dancers onstage for big production numbers from the shows "42nd St." and "New York, New York."

Most of the choreography was done by Frame and DeHaas, who also have worked together as instructors at the Musical Feet Tap Dance School since its inception in 1978.

Features included "Rondo," a Mozart sonata choreographed



Photo by Marty Schwarzbauer

Dancing performances range from traditional to modern in local musical production.

and performed by three teen-age students who have been working with Frame for seven years. Angela Cox, 15, Ann Romine, 15, and Tura Boyet, who will soon turn 14, were hilarious as klutzy ballerinas bumping into each other, falling down and trading evil-eyed accusing glances across the stage.

Cox, Romine and Boyet also choreographed part of the "Carousel" production for some of the first-year dancers, and Romine was largely responsible for the training of that group.

"Lonely At the Top," a Randy Newman song starring 10-year-old Alex Long, one of only four males in the show, also was very good, but I felt the three supporting dancers in the piece were kept too far in the background.

The best of the pieces featuring smaller kids had to be the opening segment of "Opus Number One," from "New York, New York." The enthusiasm and exuberance of these little girls dancing their hearts out was wonderful. "Opus" was also the best of the big production numbers.

Other highlights of the show included DeHaas and her daughter Nicole's performance of "Everything Old Is New

Again" from "All That Jazz." Nicolette Larson's "Rhumba Girl," with its island theme and sexy costumes also was well done, as was the Betty Boop number, "Keep a Little Song Handy," another mother/daughter dance featuring Dawn and Joan Cypress.

The costuming and ensemble dancing of the Billy Joel's Dance Hall number, "Root Beer Rag," and of Cab Calloway's "Minnie the Moocher" were quite good, as was featured dancer Kathy James as "Minnie."

There were, of course, the type of problems associated with children on stage. Before the show started, two little girls wandered out onto the stage area, stopped and giggled a little, then dashed off into the wings on the left. At the end of one of the other numbers, one of the girls walked offstage ahead of cue, turned around and grabbed one of the other girls and led her off stage as well.

"I was just delighted," Frame said of the overall performance. "I felt better walking offstage after the show Friday night than I have ever felt" since the inception of Musical Feet, she said.

By Marty Schwarzbauer

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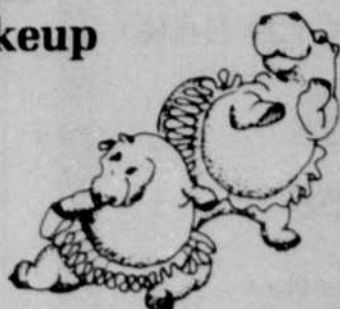
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