



THE CAST OF NEW HOPE'S HAIRSPRAY

*Beloved musical dazzles  
at New Hope Christian College*

**W**ith a large, skilled cast and an indefinable but undeniable energy, the reaction to New Hope Christian College's *Hairspray* was: Wow. "This is one of the best musicals I've seen in Eugene," an audience member gushed at intermission.

*Hairspray* is the story of Tracy Turnblad (Natalie Pruett), a chubby, white teen in Baltimore with big hair who takes up the cause of integration because it just doesn't make sense that black and white people can't dance together. It's a Civil Rights fantasia. Tough questions of race, privilege, ambition and size-ism are resolved

through music, dancing and fabulous hair.

It's the perfect musical for New Hope Christian College, a school that purports a heavy emphasis on positive cross-cultural relationships and considers the creative arts integral to their mission to spread a Christian gospel. Of the 39-member cast, 23 are New Hope college students, alumni or faculty. Apparently, everyone at New Hope can sing and dance really well.

Director Cindy Kenny tapped community members beyond school grounds, rounding out her cast with some serious local muscle. The cast includes the women's trio Floyd and Price, as well as Andiel Brown (director of the UO gospel choir) and a number of longtime Eugene powerhouses such as Erica Jean, Richard Leebrick and Robyn Rothstein. Jennifer Scurlock inspires as Motormouth Maybelle.

The fun choreography by Lindsey Salfran was executed with style, and with a plot dependent on good dancing, every cast member followed through. Music direction was strong as well. The huge cast and revolving set pieces all moved as though in collective dance to the continuing beat of the live band.

This production does not ask its audience members to overlook any detail. There were no singers learning to act, nor any actors learning to sing. And the casting was refreshingly age appropriate. Suspension of disbelief was limited only to placing our hearts in 1962 Baltimore. As a result, audience members were on their feet before the curtain call even started. ■

*Hairspray runs through April 26 at New Hope Center Auditorium, 1790 Charnelton St; \$15-\$21.*

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