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ON STAGE

COVER STORY

Students' talents devoted to E. European folk culture

By ELIZABETH A. SHAW
Staff Writer

Making it through college with good grades can be tough enough. But imagine if you had to travel to a different U.S. city each weekend (and during all of your breaks, as well) to perform.

For every member of Pittsburgh's Duquesne University Tamburitzan Dancers, that schedule is a reality. No imagination required.

"We go to school all week and every weekend we travel by bus to cities 12 to 24 hours away. There's no time for studying on the weekend," said junior Mary Stafura from West Mifflin, Pa.

The Tamburitzans, who perform 80 to 85 times a season, help keep alive the music and dance of Eastern Europe.

The songs are sung in the native languages and dialects of each country including: Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

The group has five national tours a year to each region of the United States, each lasting seven to 10 days. They tour in August, at Thanksgiving, in January, during spring break and in May. And all members go to camp for a month in the summer.

"Camp has a strict atmosphere," Mary Stafura said. "It's like any soccer or football camp. We start at 8 a.m. and have sessions all day long. There are no outside influences, so it really allows us

TAMBURITZANS

WHAT: Folk dancers, musicians and singers from Duquesne University
WHERE: West Middle School, West Junior Avenue, Binghamton
WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Saturday
TICKETS: \$12 for adults; \$11 for senior citizens and students. To order tickets call 754-0249, also available at door.

to focus our minds because we don't have to worry about school. We have to put together a two-hour show in three weeks."

So how do they manage such a rigorous schedule?

"It's tough, but I've been balancing academics and performance all my life," said Kalman Magyar, a junior from Teaneck, N.J. "I studied violin at the Manhattan School of Music every Saturday during high school and still graduated a year early. I've always been a busy guy."

Stafura has also balanced school with dancing, and said that it seems that the less time you have to do things, the more you get done.

"The group teaches discipline and budgeting time and those abilities go on

to your studying," Stafura said.

All of the students in the group attend the university on an \$11,300 scholarship, she said.

Each of Duquesne's schools has its own tuition rates, so the students are responsible for making up the difference through other financial aid.

"The auditions are pretty competitive, especially since there are more international students to compete against. Out of 30 or 40 students, only eight to 10 are accepted," Stafura said.

Magyar and Stafura were both "born into" folk dancing and the Tamburitzans.

When Stafura was born, her father, Paul G. Stafura, who is now the managing director, was the road manager. Every summer she went to the camp with her dad.

"I started tap dancing when I was 5 and when I turned 10 I began ballet and Tamburitzan. I joined the Junior Tamburitzan group as a hobby."

Magyar had a similar experience. His parents are very active in the Hungarian community in the New Jersey and New York City area.

"I've been dancing the Hungarian dances since I (can remember). My father found out about the group and encouraged my older sister to audition. She was accepted and a year later I was too."

The Tamburitzan dancers not only celebrate a culture, their performances

celebrate a unique purpose.

"With all the struggles that are going on in Eastern Europe, we provide an outlet for peace. We perform music and dances from all different nationalities back to back all in one show, nationalities that are in conflict like the Russians and Ukrainians or the Croats and the Serbs," Magyar said.

Some people may find it unusual that college students would be interested in this kind of performance.

"Some people think it's weird but I really don't care what they think. Open-minded people think it's very cool and respect us very much. Nothing makes me happier than performing; it's what I look forward to every week," Magyar said.

The Tamburitzans have visited Binghamton for the past six years, sponsored by Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Endicott. Paul Farbanish, vice president of the church council, said there are a lot of people in the Southern Tier who are of Eastern European background.

"People like to see that culture exhibited through the Tamburitzan dancers. The performances are usually well-attended; 700 to 800 people come to see them."

The show is approximately two hours long, and although there is no age restriction, it is recommended for ages 10 and up.

THEATER

Two 'Barefoot' actresses play roles behind the scenes, too

By ELIZABETH A. SHAW
Staff Writer

The Binghamton Stage Company's production of *Barefoot in the Park* could not be more timely. Set in February, the comedy portrays two newlyweds whose blissful love is hampered when the wife decides to play matchmaker.

An unusual feature of this Binghamton Stage Company production is that both the executive director and the choreographer also have leading roles. And neither women did not pull strings in order to get the part, in fact neither had ever acted before.

Amber Platt, 22, of Binghamton, has choreographed several of the company's past plays including this one.

"Through working on other plays I became interested in act-

BAREFOOT IN THE PARK

WHAT: Neil Simon play, Binghamton Stage Company production
WHERE: Sears-Harkness Theatre, Roberson Museum & Science Center, 30 Front St., Binghamton.
WHEN: Today, Saturday and Sunday and March 4, 5, 6. Friday and Saturday shows begin at 8 p.m.; Sunday shows begin at 2 p.m.
COST: \$8 at door, or in advance (call 774-6600).

ing," Platt said. "I have never acted before and just thought I'd read for the part, and I got the lead role."

Executive director Linda Fenescey of Binghamton also just fell into acting.

"I've been involved with the

company for quite a while, and *Barefoot* is one of my favorite plays," Fenescey said. "A long time ago I jokingly said 'If we do *Barefoot in the Park* I'll be Mother.' When we decided to do it, I auditioned for the first time in my life and got the part."

The Binghamton Stage Company was founded in 1992 by Jennifer Miller, 22, of Endicott. In addition to managing the company and directing the plays, she attends Binghamton University.

"I had always planned on starting on stage group," Miller said. "It just seemed like the right time. It up was hard at the beginning,

the money came from all different places. But after our first show, *Hair*, we've been self-sustaining."

The company puts on about seven shows a year with a membership that varies with each play. The largest cast was 27 for *West Side Story* and the smallest was two for *Sleuth*. The company's next production is *Kander and Ebb's The World Goes Round*, a cabaret musical highlighting songs from all their musicals.

The company is still looking for cast members for this production. If you're interested in auditioning, call 774-6600.

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