

PERFORMING ARTS

# Stage Right submits flawless musical 'Anything Goes'

Stage Right of Texas may have set a new standard for on stage dancing when it opened Cole Porter's musical "Anything Goes" in downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre Feb. 14. In this flawless production, all except the opening scene takes place aboard an ocean liner, the S.S. American, sailing to England from New York.

Stealing words to title song from the movie "Love Story:" "Where Shall I Begin?"

This show has it all: Phenomenal tap dancing; excellent vocal performances; glamorous stars wearing stunning gowns; impeccable characterizations; unpolluted humor. And appreciative audiences. What else is there?

On opening night spontaneous applause kept interrupting the performance, which also is true of subsequent crowds.

"The first time I saw the audience's reaction to the big tap dance number that



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closes Act I, I wept on stage," one cast member said. "I was so happy for all those young people who had been rehearsing since November."

In that closing Act I scene, the stage is filled with about two dozen dancers, led by show director Randy Bianchi, a tap dancer famous in his own right. All wore sailor costumes, and were tapping in unison so that the coordinated rhythm brought the thunderous crowd to its feet, applauding approval.

"There's no sound on earth like the sound of 20 or 30 chorus dancers executing a marvelous tap production number on

stage," Randy Bianchi wrote in his director's letter. Now every person who has attended knows that sound.

Meaghan Shulz plays Reno Sweeney, the female lead. Christina J. Taylor is close behind her, depicting Hope Harcourt. It would tax any listener to determine whose voice is lovelier. That decision likely would end in a tie. Both are worthy of their spotlight moments.

Michael Raabe makes a perfect villain, comic gangster Moonface Martin. Raabe wrings every laugh available from those hilarious lines and situations.

Jonathan Rozas is almost too handsome to portray wealthy- but-rather-clueless Brit, Evelyn Oakleigh, but Rozas quite capably manages that task. One of the best scenes of the show is his comic dance with Meagan Shulz, while they duet to "The Gypsy In Me."

To mention only a few of

the many who made this show "go" is to do a disservice, because a vehicle as successful as this requires dozens of dedicated talents. But, sadly for me, there are just too many to list. Maybe that's a good thing. Audiences are confirming all this excellence through their responses.

Some of the dozens not seen on stage are Penny Andros who assists Randy; scenic designer Denise DeBold (you'll marvel at the huge cruise ship set that she imagined); costumers Deborah Blake, Elaine Steinbach and Jennifer Simon; spot lighter Jane Haley; lighting designer Roger Ormiston; Derek Twinney; Nick Marshall; set builder extraordinaire Dennis O'Connor; and on and on like that.

The first few minutes were a bit slow on opening night, but everything soon reached and sustained musical warp speed. The music was taped by a professional orchestra, but you

might not realize this until you look around for the musicians. Every note and every step smoothly coordinates.

On opening night Stage Right hospitably hosted a Valentine reception for ev-

erybody in the audience.

"Anything Goes" goes away after Sunday's finale, a 2 p.m. matinee. It also runs Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets cost \$20; less

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