

ENTERTAINMENT

THE BATTALION

Page 5A • Thursday, April 8, 2004

'Czeching' it out

Czechoslovakian dance troupe Mimi Fortunaie to perform at Fallout Theater

By Will Knous
THE BATTALION

Musicals

what:

The Mimi Fortunaie Dance Theatre

where:

The Fallout Theater

how much:

Admission is free

doors open:

April 17th at 7 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY OF • THE MIMI FORTUNAE DANCE THEATRE

The Mimi Fortunaie Dance Theatre (above), a several-act Czechoslovakian dance troupe, will perform next Saturday at the Robert Wenck Fallout Theater. The performance is co-sponsored by the Department of Performance Studies at Texas A&M.

All around the Bryan-College Station area one can see the influence and evidence of the Czech heritage. From the Kolache Festival every year in Caldwell to the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences, the Czech legacy in the Brazos Valley are undeniable. On April 17, Aggies can add one more event to the list with the arrival of The Mimi Fortunaie Dance Theatre.

Clint Machann, Texas A&M English professor said Mimi Fortunaie's performances is a mix of culture and beauty.

"Founded in 1985, Mimi Fortunaie presents a fanciful program that combines mime and historical court, folk and modern dance forms and techniques in a theatrical narrative style," Machann said.

Students may be wondering what exactly to expect when a popular Czech dance troupe performs modern and classic traditional folk dances at the Robert Wenck Fallout Theater in the Blocker building. "(Mimi Fortunaie's) two-hour 'Mirror of Ages' evokes the mystery of ancient times as it seeks to educate as well as to entertain," Machann said.

The 10-member troupe will start its Texas tour in Denton and will be accompanied by an instrumental ensemble composed of University of North Texas music students, Machann said.

North Texas Professor Tom Sovik said that though the event might sound like a stuffy performance for Czech history majors, it is, in fact, stirring.

"We wanted to bring something around that would be interesting (regular) people," Sovik said. "I mean, I get bored listening to a string quartet, and this is really exciting. We wanted something that non-music people could get into."

Sovik said Mimi Fortunaie's performances are based on everything from the street theater of the middle ages and the puns and sayings of that time, to old-time class wars and pub brawls. But that does not mean the performances are out of style.

"(The troupe) is not boring," Sovik said. "Part of their show is this type of bar room dancing — where people are dancing and beating one another with sticks and jumping around all over the place — this really exciting."

Sovik said the group is one of the most popular in the Czech Republic for 13 years. Sovik has been taking student groups, about 20 of them, from UNT to the Czech Republic. The groups see Mimi Fortunaie perform on each trip and they end up spending the evening

with them afterwards.

"They formed around 20 years ago as a contemporary dance group — lately they have changed to a historical dance group," Sovik said. "They basically dress in costume and perform music and dances from the medieval times and the Renaissance."

Sovik said that though the group speaks only Czech and is new to American turf, the members are interested in American culture in Texas.

"None of the group are professional dancers — they all hold outside jobs," Sovik said. "This is their first time in the U.S. They all want to see the Alamo and NASA and the ocean. They all want to see some Native American (culture) — so we are going to some Native American Museums."

Junior communication major Lani Jurena was raised in Caldwell and is third-generation Czech. Jurena said she understands the importance of the group to perform at A&M.

"My grandparents came over here through Galveston, and (they) still speak Czech," Jurena said. "I think them coming is really cool, because around this area in places like Caldwell and West there is such a huge Czech influence. A lot of Czechs attend these festivals where they have traditional dancing and food."

Jurena said the performance will benefit members of the Aggie community who have Czech in their heritage.

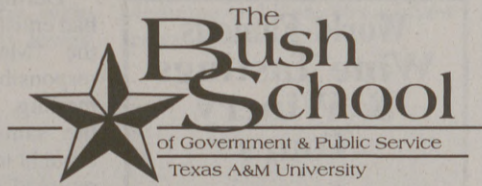
"Nowadays you don't hear too much representation from the Czechs, and it's good to keep this culture alive," Jurena said.

The performance is being brought to A&M by the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas (CEFT), of which Professor Machann is the chair.

"They are being sponsored primarily by the CEFT," Machann said. "We're planning something called the Residency in Czech Music and Culture — and this tour is helping us to fund that project. It is the 50th anniversary of CEFT though we have only been here at A&M since 2000."

Machann said the purpose and message of this performance and the CEFT is education — musically and otherwise. Machann hopes this visit by Mimi Fortunaie will be indicative of things to come for A&M as well as the success of the CEFT.

"Our purpose is to educate people about the musical heritage of the Czech lands," Machann said. "From classical music, all the way to popular and folk music, because you know almost everyone has heard Czech polkas but there are very important classical Czech composers that are (overlooked)."



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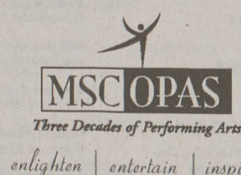
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