

Dancing makes musical a delight

"If you love tap dancing, you'll love 'My One and Only.'"

Seldom have so many tapping feet been heard in a Little Theatre-On the Square production. Seldom have they sounded so good.

The tapping in this salute to the music of George and Ira Gershwin sounds louder and clearer than those dancing feet of "42nd Street." It's a change for the better.

And, everyone who does tap up a storm dances so well.

From Richard Ruth, who pulls double duty as choreographer and the male lead, to Charles Bell, in an interesting switch from his usual tough-guy role, the dancing is the best we've seen all summer.

"My One and Only," the Little Theatre's final production, opened Wednesday afternoon.

It tells the story of Capt. Billy Buck Chandler (Ruth), a young American aviator who hopes to be the first to fly solo from New York to Paris. He meets and falls in love with Edythe Herbert (Shannon McHugh), a lovely English Channel swimmer.

The musical is set in the 1920s, but is an '80s creation. Broadway star Tommy Tune wanted to create a musical using Gershwin's music. He hired writers who, in turn, produced "My One and Only." The musical played three years on Broadway.

One reason for the long stay is an impressive, and soggy, dancing scene. That's right, the stage resembles a pool after Ruth and McHugh dance to "'S Wonderful'" in a water trough built into Robert C. Martin's attractive set.

The show-stopping number thrilled the audience and sprinkled drops upon Musical Director David Fehr. That didn't douse the band, which sounded great and

**Steve
Metsch**

Review



didn't drown out voices.

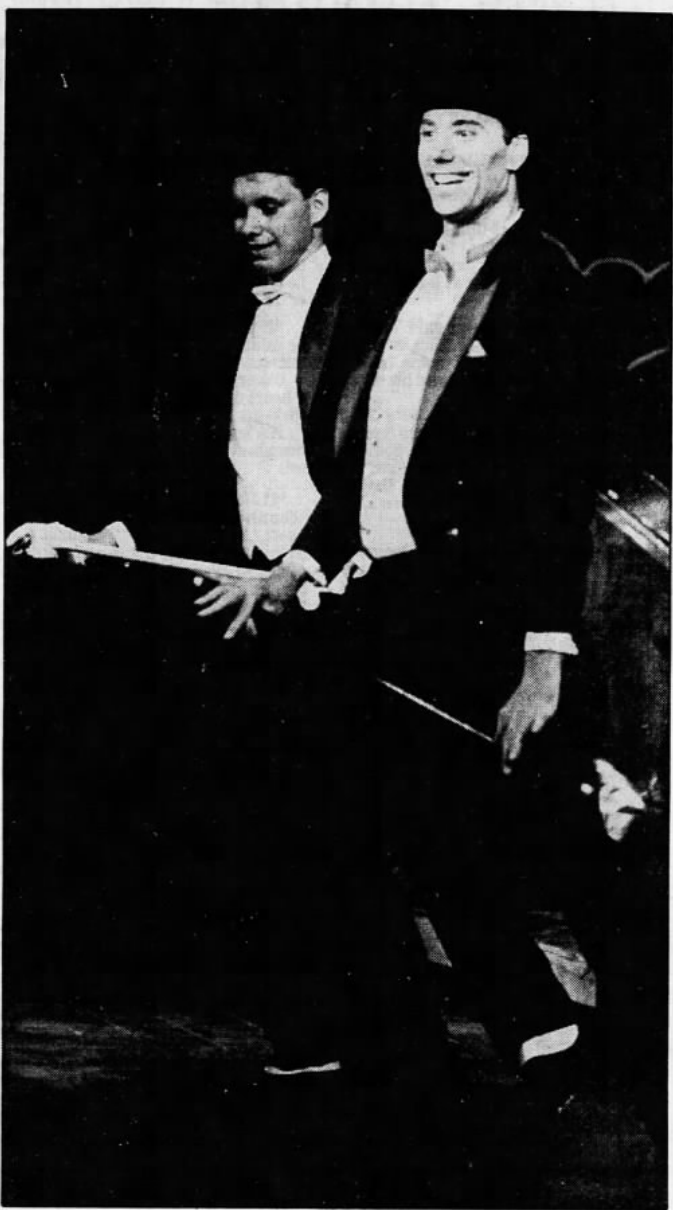
Ruth re-creates the role Tune played on Broadway. This is Ruth's second stint as Billy. He earned a Jeff Award nomination in Chicago for an earlier portrayal. It's easy to see why with his youthful eagerness and pleasant voice. He and McHugh, in another strong performance, make a nice couple.

As mentioned earlier, Bell is quite entertaining as Mr. Magix, Billy's mentor. Bell becomes a Henry Higgins type of character who is on stage too briefly.

Jack Milo, a favorite of Little Theatre patrons, turns in another good performance as Prince Nicky, a shifty conman who tosses a wrench into the blossoming romance.

"My One and Only" isn't flawless. The set is designed to move scenery in and out from the sides. It works pretty well but there are some short delays. Three roving singers, The New Rhythm Boys, sound good together but Roger Seyer had trouble hitting the high notes. A movie-like lighting effect mysteriously reappeared during a romantic scene.

Director M. Seth Reines, concluding his first summer in Sullivan, has done a nice job with "My One and Only." The action moves smoothly and the two hours fly by.



Richard Ruth, right, and Roger Seyer tap their way through the Wednesday opening of "My One and Only" at Little Theatre-On The Square in Sullivan.

My One and Only

Principal characters

Billy Chandler.....Richard Ruth
Prince Nicky.....Jack Milo
Edythe Herbert.....Shannon McHugh
Mickey.....Barbara Early
Rev. Montgomery.....Jeff Coopwood
Mr. Magix.....Charles Bell

Crew

Director.....M. Seth Reines
Costumes.....Susan Branch

Lighting.....Patty Takahashi
Choreography.....Richard Ruth
Music.....David Fehr
Scenery.....Robert C. Martin
Stage manager.....Deborah Jo Knopick

Presented by The Little Theatre-On the Square. Performances are 8 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; 2 and 8 p.m. Wednesday; 4 and 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday; through Aug. 21. Tickets: \$12.75 to \$16.75. Call 728-7375.