

DANCE REVIEW

A Sisterhood of Tappers at LaMama

SOLE SISTERS. "A celebration featuring Tap's Grandes Dames and Prima Tapperinas." Jane Goldberg, artistic director; Constance Vails-Hill, director; costume design by Mardi Philips, musical direction by Bertha Hope. Text by Murray Horwitz and Susan Woolhandler. Wednesday night at LaMama E.T.C., 74A E.4th St. Through Nov. 2.

By Janice Berman

If the price of entertainment has you feeling a little tapped out, has LaMama got a deal for you. For \$10, you can spend a terrific hour or so watching a revue put together by Jane Goldberg, one of the best of the younger generation of tap dancers.

For "Sole Sisters," Goldberg, who runs the Changing Times Tap Dancing Company, has brought together seven women of all ages and all stylistic persuasions whose credentials range from the Cotton Club to the Irish Arts Center. To put it mildly, they all know what they're doing. And what's fun about it is the way their contrasting styles can give way to a true sisterhood of tappers, a community of mutual support and encouragement.

The dances are loosely strung together by a gentle story line that has to do with Cinderella (Goldberg) bemoaning the absence of a prince in her life, or even a Fred Astaire. "I need a partner!"

Her fairy godmother, statuesque Harriet Browne, who has worked with the likes of Count Basie and Duke Ellington, scolds her in Yiddish: "Where in the Talmud is it written that you need a partner?" Browne proves her point by soloing in a sand dance, first sprinkling cinders into the sandbox, then scuffing and scraping in a smart rhythm, with musical director Joyce Brown

on piano and Karen Korsmeyer on bass. Then out pop the rest of the dancers, snappily time-stepping in tuxes, introducing the time "when tap was queen!"

Frances Nealy, who tapped with Bill (Bojangles) Robinson and turned to acting in the '60s, does a stair dance, tapping up, slipping down, tapping up, perching on top and intricately putting foot over foot in that tiny space. A foursome in flapper dresses swoops through a soft-shoe number. Brenda Bufalino, a virtuosic Goldberg contemporary, does her own salute to Astaire, mixing legato ease and aggressive attack, dozens of steps streaming from her soles.

Sarah Safford and two other dancers clutching babydolls harmonize as they tap through "The Post-Partum Blues," Safford's funny take on motherhood. Goldberg does a monologue, talking and tapping — which is like rubbing your stomach and patting your head — on how it's more likely she'll be bombed by a terrorist than find a mate at her age.

The last part of the show is especially delightful, with Nealy rapping and tapping "Dancin' is My Game," red-haired Josephine McNamara's feet flying through an Irish step dance and Miriam Greaves-Ali leading the whole troupe through a South African boot dance. The latter was intensely rhythmic, danced in rubber boots with jingle bells around the ankles in a manner that was so outgoing and warm it seemed to make the audience want to join in.

And one woman did; it was unplanned. Her name is Julia Mayer, she's 73 years old, she's been tapping for 60 years and she said she'll never stop. The Sole Sisters, however, are scheduled to stop Nov. 2. Best to tap on down there and enjoy. ■■■



Handzel/Berkun

Jane Goldberg, left, and Sarah Safford in "Sole Sisters"