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## OU dancers discover new alphabet

Story: SUSAN TAUBER KLEIN  
Staff photos: DOUG BAUMAN

"Z" isn't the last letter of the alphabet according to Dr. Seuss's book "On Beyond Zebra." There are other letters most of us, especially the adults, don't know, such as "yuzz," "flunn," "tuzzo," "snee," and "humpf-humpf-a-dumpler."

You don't have to go to school to learn these new letters either. You can learn them at the two productions of Oakland Dance Theater's new show, "New Improved Alphabet Stew" on Saturday, Jan. 20, at Rochester High School Auditorium, 180 S. Livernois. The Rochester branch of the American Association of University Women is sponsoring the show at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., as part of its 1977-78 Children's Theater Series program, or ticket information call the AAUW at 681-1118.

Carol Halstead, dance director at Oakland University, four dancers from the Oakland Dance Theater and two OU musicians created "New Improved Alphabet Stew."

"This is really children's theater," said dancer Beth Taylor, who's from Pontiac. "It's a visual, singing and talking production in which we involve the children."

Jill Johanson, another dancer, said this production is an education tool. "It shows them how to put words to rhythms, books to music," said the Pontiac Township resident. "The shapes of the letters are bizarre to begin with and we keep changing the shapes of the letters."

Others in the show are dancers Winston Poe from Detroit, Adrian Manigault from Redford Township, musicians Paul Johannes and Dan O'Connor and Junette Platt who's in charge of lights.

ALTHOUGH THE letters in Dr. Seuss's alphabet have creative names, it took creative people to put them together into an entertaining act for children. Ms. Halstead is a pro at this.

"I'm interested in creative shows, into seeing ideas come alive. I found this white thing at home, just a long piece of cloth, and I saw a whole dance come from it," said Ms. Halstead.

The "thing" is used as a slingshot in the number about the letter "snee." During performances children from the audience will get into the giant slingshot and be able to interact with the dancers.

For the letter "flunn," O'Connor, who will be playing the saxophone, gets involved with the actions of the dancers. A logical progression, after



OU Dance Theater takes the letters in Dr. Seuss's book "On Beyond Zebra" and turns them inside out.

reading what Dr. Seuss wrote about "flunn."

"... softish nice fellow who hides in the tunnel. He only comes out of his hole, I'm afraid. When the right kind of softish nice music is played."

AT DIFFERENT times on stage, the dancers will play musical chairs, have the always exciting chase scene, and basically "play with each letter, turning it inside out and all around," as one dancer explained.

One dancer will even pretend to be a balloon. Although the secret of what happens to her won't be mentioned in this article, here's a clue. Another dancer is a pretend pin.

"The dancers do what's best on their body," Ms. Halstead said. "This isn't

a strict, choreographed dance but it is more sophisticated than "Dancing Punks and Other Things" that we did before."

After each letter is explained by music, sound and movement to the children, one of the dancers will cut out the letter, an inspiration from the Matisse cut-out exhibit.

Not only is the "New Alphabet Stew" an original dance, so is the music. The two musicians wrote the score from which the dances were created. Children won't hear just the traditional drum and guitar. The auditorium will also be filled with sounds of a toy piano, piccolo, recorders, orchestra bells, maracas, tamborines, cymbals and various percussion instruments.

"We want to develop the children's interest in instruments themselves and

in the different sounds. We want to show them how to delve into their own backyard and how to make music with sticks," explained Johannes.

"NEW IMPROVED ALPHABET STEW" lasts 45 to 50 minutes, the right length for a class period presentation. Props consist of costume racks, costumes and shadows. When the show is done for schools, the troupe will give workshops, as they did for "Dancing Punks and Other Things," on how to move to rhythms.

The effect of the alphabet show may be overwhelming. The English language may have new words that never could have been before.

As Dr. Seuss said, "Most people stop at the 'Z,' but not we. My alphabet starts where your alphabet ends."

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### Kids Night

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### Celebrity Night

Wednesday, January 18th, will feature many well

known sports and entertainment personalities who will meet with Auto Show visitors between 7 and 10 P.M.

### New Car Auction Nights

Thursday and Friday, January 19th and 20th, will feature a traveling auctioneer who will move from exhibit to exhibit where the auctions will take place between 7 and 10 P.M.

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Detroit Auto Dealers Association.