Hyde School Cast Gives Lively Preview Of 'America's Spirit '77'

By BOB FORKEY
District Reporter

GEORGETOWN — You could probably say many Hyde School students are old troopers now.

They've performed on Broadway, in the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., and all kinds of places in between with their bicentennial production "America's Spirit."

If they are old troopers, there is nothing blase about them. They took "America's Spirit '77" to Georgetown Central School Tuesday night with all the verve they demonstrated at their first performance a year ago.

It was the same kind of enthusiasm shown before the original production snowballed from an intended three-day performance in Bath to the national attention-getter it had become before summer's end.

They were a little cramped in the school's all-purpose room, but not to their disadvantage. For about 45 minutes their spirits soared, and apparently so did the audience's.

It was a preview of the production that has evolved and gone beyond last year's "Spirit." There were no historical readings, dramatic sketches or any of the variety of dances that will be staged in the full production which will open in Bath during May.

It was all music, but if you wanted to see and hear more, the nine numbers on the program were a skimpy offering, an appetizer.

The short performance opened with a contemporary instrumental, "Bags Groove," a bouncy piece using guitars, some amplified, an electric piano and drums.

After an introduction by tour director Frederick Heinrich, the full chorus worked into the only two pieces from last year's production that were on the program.

I was glad there was something from the original: "Amen" and "Oh, Happy Day," two getcha in-a-good-mood pieces, rousing and powerful. And it was good to see and hear again the familiar faces and fine voices of Arnold Goodgame, Millie Gonzales and Tom Baez, soloists in the two songs.

An interesting version of "Proud Mary" kept up the pace, beginning slowly with the big, easy voice of Mary Henderson, then exploding with speed, three more voices and amplified guitars.

Social statements were made in "Louisiana, 1927," "Geronimo's Cadillac," (last year's production, which traced the nation's history in song, sketch and dance, did not mention the white man's cruelty to Indians), and "Calico Silver."

The good feeling came back when "Lean On Me" and clowning and laughs accompanied "Backslider's Wine."

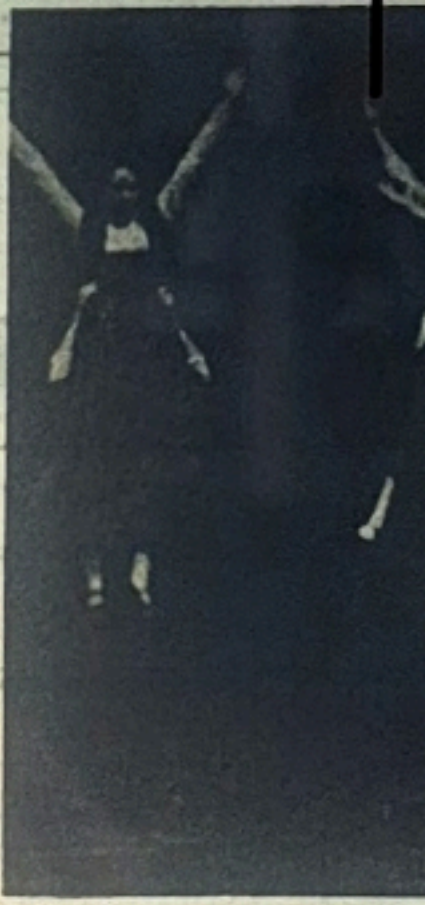
The program's final number was called, appropriately, "Statue of Liberty." Hyde took the words from the inscription on the Statue of Liberty and set them to song, nicely.

There was no letup in the energy and good spirit displayed in this small part of "America's Spirit '77".

And that spirit of people doing things together was underlined at the short show's end.

The students added a song, actually three of them, to the program, singing an audience-catching round. And as it neared its end they moved into the audience, still singing, making contact with other individuals, shaking hands, and, when the song ended, striking up conversations.

The show was sponsored by the Georgetown Community Center and the Island Talent Works, and about 25 Hyude students were fed Tuesday night at the home of Anne Chase, by her and Marion Watson. Three other women sent along food for the supper.



Hyde School students in a square dance scene presented as part of a preview performance of 'America's Spirit '77'

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HYDE SCHOOL. BATH.

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Portland Press Herald.
February 17, 1977. p. 6.

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