

Benitez dances her way into Kimball Hall

By Micki Haller
Senior Editor

The Maria Benitez Spanish Dance Company stomped into Kimball Recital Hall Monday night with the traditional fire and flair of flamenco.

Not only did each member of the company convey its passion and emotion through dance, but also through the elaborate costumes and spicy music.

The first dance, "Jaleo," began with the music of two guitarists and a singer. The dancers walked onto the stage in a stiff procession, and the light was filtered, as if it were coming through tree leaves in the late afternoon.

A woman wore a red dress with black polka-dots, a man was completely in black, another man donned a black suit with white shirt, and a woman dressed in black with fringe.

The women twisted and writhed; even though the motion was fluid, the dance was punctuated with the rhythm. Their entire bodies undulated to the music.

The flamenco is distinguished by its fancy footwork, and the use of the hands. The dancers clap and stomp; they twirl their hands and tap their feet.

"Solea" is one of the oldest traditions of the "deep song." Benitez kept the dance as fresh as its origins, however.

She wore a white dress with black polka-dots and a long train. The most amazing thing was the way Benitez maneuvered the train through the dance. She kicked it, she lifted and carried it, she watched it as it followed her across the floor.

Antonio Vega helped her with her shawl. She twirled into it — the simple act of dressing became flourished. She wrapped herself in it, then

walked offstage with a great deal of pride. The audience loved it.

The highlight of the first act was "Viva La Jota." Based on the jota from northern Spain, the dance was punctuated by great mountain vitality.

The dancers wore gypsy costumes, and used castanets to punctuate their performance. The two women and man leapt into the air, swirled around the floor, and performed a very happy dance.

Antonio Vega performed "Faruca." Vega, a tall, thin man was dressed entirely in black, with high-waisted pants and a blousy shirt.

Accompanying him were the two guitars and the singer. The singer's voice was a moan, a cross between an Indian chant and a monk's.

The men's dancing lacked the flirtatious flair of the women's steps. But, it was just as passionate. Vega clapped, he stepped, he stomped. His legs moved like rubber-bands, so fast were his feet tapping a tattoo upon the stage.

Benitez proved her mastery over the traditional dance during "Alegrías."

Dressed in black pants with a red vest, she danced almost in a man's style, but added some slinky, feminine touches. Benitez was sultry, graceful, passionate. The others were good, but she had that something extra.

For the finale, the entire company joined in the dance. The audience laughed as the fat little singer began to dance, but quickly began to respect the man's technique and skill.

From the most exalted to the last musician, the Benitez dance troupe displayed the utmost skill, and brought flaming life to Kimball's performance series.



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

'Geranium Diapers': Giggle, giggle, giggle

By Mick Dyer
Senior Reporter

The members of Geranium Diapers, an unconventional local band with its roots in industrial music, have a love-hate relationship with their music and audience.

They just love to be hated.

Shawn Michaud, a junior electrical engineering major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and vocalist, trombone-player and drum-tracks programmer for Geranium Diapers, sums up the band's innovative attitude towards music best:

"I'll play just about anything I can get a sound out of."

For example, Michaud plays an instrument he made from a rusty old pipe he found in a field.

"I put my trombone mouthpiece

on it," he said. "We used it in a song called 'Cow Hell' and it was pretty effective."

Michaud describes the band's music as having a sense of humor.

"Everything we do is kind of funny, in a way," he said. "Some of our song titles, you can tell they're funny, like 'Petunia Takeover' and 'Thunking Emo.'"

Todd Scott, keyboardist for Geranium Diapers, emphasizes the spontaneous nature of the band's music.

"I don't think we even have a direction," Scott said. "We're just looking for a reaction — good or bad."

The band has played together since the first Broadside tape came out about a year ago.

"Mike Davis, who started the Broadside project, came up to us

and said 'Do you want to do a song' and so I said 'All right, we'll throw together a band,'" Michaud said.

Geranium Diapers recorded its first song in Michaud's basement. The members used only one microphone and it took them 10 minutes to record it. And their marginal concern for sound quality shows on the first Broadside tape.

"Everybody else only got one song and they were really short and everybody really hated our song, because it was really long and noisy," Michaud said. "It's pretty well generally hated."

"I was striving for a song that somebody would listen to once and then want to fast forward over every time else they came to it," Michaud said. "People who listen to pop are just going to hate it."

Since its musical debut on the

first edition of Broadside, Geranium Diapers have released three tapes. Five copies of the latest tape, "Republic Issue #5" are still available at local record stores.

"We've been doing editions of 10," Michaud said. "But we've always sold out."

The B-side of the latest tape is a 25-minute tangent from an obscure region of Michaud's mind to fill out the other 30 minutes of a one-hour tape. It features a repetitive drum pattern and a 20-second tape-loop that goes, "giggle, giggle, giggle, swamp-rat, giggle, giggle, giggle."

Weird.

"I've talked to people who have listened to the whole B-side and said it just goes on and on forever and never does anything," Michaud said. "Anybody who would sit and listen to the B-side has got to be kind of twisted."

Harry Dingman III, guitarist for Geranium Diapers and also For Against agreed.

"I'd rather listen to a dryer run," he said.

But Michaud encourages people to listen to it anyway.

"If you can make it through the first eight minutes there is something," he said. "I knocked off the drum pattern and talked for a while. I do this Ron Kurtenbach imitation, just to torment them."

Strange as it may seem, Geranium Diapers has developed a limited, underground following.

"Actually, it's really limited," Michaud said. "We have some dedicated fans who go to Project and say, 'Hey there's a new Geranium Diapers tape' and buy it right away."

But the members of the band have no idea who it is who listens to their music, because they've never played live.

"We were supposed to play actually once, but the show got cancelled," Michaud said. "What I'd really like to do is open for the New Brass Guns."

'Anybody who would sit and listen to the B-side has got to be kind of twisted.'

-- Michaud

"I think that would be really fun," Michaud said. "We could scare off their whole audience before the evening even started."

Geranium Diapers submitted a song for the most recent edition of Broadside, which will be released Friday. Michaud said the song is not included on the 90-minute tape. Gregg Cosgrove, who is in charge of music for Broadside, could not be reached to explain why.

"That comment Cosgrove made about almost all of the songs appearing on the tape, being real songs, was definitely pointed at us," Michaud said. "I consider what we're doing real songs, whether he does or not."

Michaud said that Geranium Diapers still supports the purpose of Broadside.

"We're not trying to knock Broadside, (it) should be supported, but I think (it) should still allow the experimental bands on the tape," he said.

The band has made some musical progress the past year.

"That first song we did for Broadside, all we wanted to do was make as much noise as we could," Michaud said. "There's a lot more continuity now."

Geranium Diapers

Courtesy of Geranium Diapers