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Dentist sinks teeth into musical role

Medford's C.H. Chou builds ties as part of Camelot's '42nd Street' song-and-dance cast

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C.H. Chou dances a vaudeville tap routine in "42nd Street" at Camelot Theatre in Talent.

photo courtesy of Camelot Theatr

December 27, 2012

By **John Darling**
for the Tidings

When Medford dentist C.H. Chou finishes a hard day at the office these days, he dashes off to Camelot Theatre in Talent — where he dances a vaudeville tap routine in a gold vest and top hat in "42nd Street."

It may seem out of character for a periodontist, but Chou was raised on Broadway musicals. He learned the trumpet, loves to sing and play the violin and enjoys the dynamic of building relationships — "which, really, is everything in life," he says.

Chou, 34, launched into show biz this year without having acted or danced on stage before.

"It's exciting. Opening night had some anxiety, but it was nothing compared to defending cases in front of my dentistry professors," he jokes, adding that the theater's artistic director, Livia Genise, and choreographer Rebecca K. Campbell mentored him with great commitment.

"He's a real sweetheart, so likable on stage, with a great presence," says Genise. "You just want to cuddle him."

Chou, a baritone, sings in three numbers, including a duet of "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" with Marlena Gray. He also has several acting lines.

"My favorite part is making a connection on stage (with other actors) and with the audience," he says. "You have to give your collaborators a definitive idea, so they can build on what you give them."

"The biggest challenge for me is keeping up professionalism, which I define as doing what's necessary, even when you don't feel like it. I'm there to tell a good story — and the show must go on."

"42nd Street" is the story of a young, inexperienced singer-dancer during the Great Depression who gets a chorus line part, then is thrust into the limelight when the lead breaks a leg. It was a movie in 1933 and Broadway hit in 1980. It showcased such notable songs as "You're Gettin' to Be a Habit With Me," "I Only Have Eyes for You" and "We're In the Money," a cute number, says Chou, built on characters finding a dime on the street.

Chou was born in Taiwan and emigrated with his parents to Delaware at age 3. He came to the Rogue Valley in 2007 for the culture, climate, little snow and a chance to volunteer, as he recently did at Mission of Mercy, the free two-day dental clinic that served more than 1,000 clients at Central Medford High School. He also is the emergency room coordinator and a board member of the Southern Oregon Dental Society.

For Chou, being on stage has meant more than a chance to be in the limelight.

It has "brought harmony to my life, with creative expression," he says. "I don't get to do that as often as I like. I feel more balanced now. I get to do it night after night, and it's challenging and exhausting, but I also feel energized."

The show continues at 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through Jan. 6. For more information, visit www.camelottheatre.org or call 541-535-5250.

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