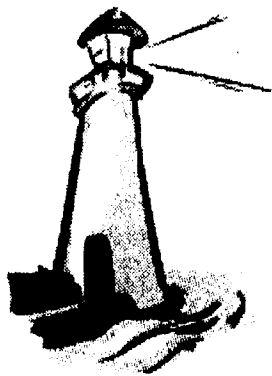


HAWK-EYED

Men's basketball loses to LaRoche, drops out of Top 25. See page 10.



# The Behrend Beacon

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TAKE A TRIP

Get a sneak peak at "Eurotrip," which opens today. See page 7.

Friday, February 20, 2004

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Vol. LI No. 19

## Classroom teaches lessons in hip-hop

Students get life lessons through new genre of musical

by Lauren Packer  
editor in chief

This isn't your grandmother's idea of a play, let alone an opera.

Welcome to "The Lesson," an original hip-hop musical play performed by members of the National Society of Black Engineers and various members of the Multi-Cultural Council.

"The Lesson," a musical from a new genre called hip-hopera, mixes hip-hop sounds with issues such as black history, sexism, racism and abortion.

Written by Behrend alumnus Jermaine Hardy, tonight is the first night students will be able to witness the combination of serious acting and rapping. Hardy wrote the musical almost three years ago. Hardy describes his play as "The Breakfast Club" meets "School Daze." The play was performed last spring at University Park. Hardy will be in attendance for Saturday's performance.

The first casting call went out in October of last semester. Since then, much preparation has gone into the play, which will serve as a fund-raiser for NSBE. Cast members have been especially busy for the past two weeks, practicing an average of 10 hours a week, in addition to demanding academic, social and work commitments.

The musical breaks down the taboo surrounding the controversial issues that "The Lesson" deals with, says Dante Spain, president of NSBE and one of the lead characters.

"It's the hip-hop twist that really sets this program apart from other

programs and plays," Spain said. "Most everyone listens to some type of hip-hop, so it will be an easy transition to this style of production."

A college classroom gets turned upside down when a hurricane forces the history class to remain in close-quarters for an extended period of time.

Alternating lines of dialogue and rap, "The Lesson" takes on a personality as unique as each one of the characters. Throw in a hot-tempered senior, a meek freshman trying to make it on a basketball scholarship, a stripper with a 4-year old child and a young yet hip professor and watch the sparks fly.

Cast members find themselves confronting issues before their peers, and occasionally confronting each other.

Relating to the issues within the play should come easy to any audience member, a theme that echoed throughout the cast after its dress rehearsal.

"We bring the controversial issues to the forefront," said director Dale Lamb. "It's a great play because we address the issues that everyone is afraid to say, but don't."

Cast member Victoria Anderson agreed.

"I think the messages of this play are appropriate for our audience. Using hip-hop to discuss these topics makes it easier for the listeners to become involved with what we are saying. Hip-hop is an up and coming part of our culture and a lot of the plays we see are boring. The music and the topics just fit our audience so well," she said.

Performing their dress rehearsal for high school students from the Perseus House Charter School of Excellence, the cast members got their first taste of what it will be like tonight when the house lights do

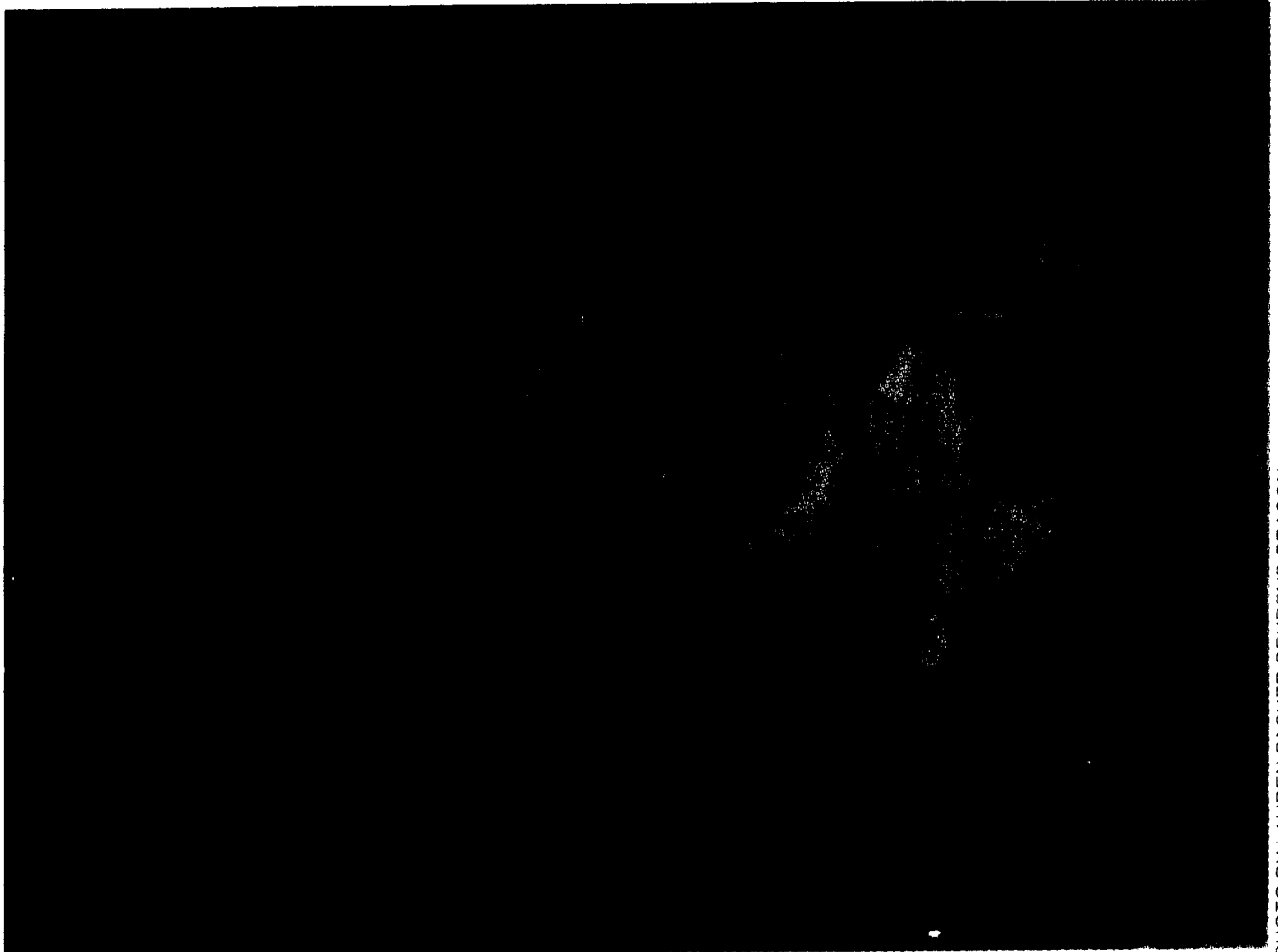


PHOTO BY LAUREN PACKER BEHREND BEACON

From left: Olga Nacalaban, Minisica Morris, Damaris Hicks, Shikia Cuttino and Dante Spain perform a scene in which Morris' character suffers a panic attack. "The Lesson," a musical hip-hop by Jermaine Hardy, will be performed in the Studio Theatre this weekend and next weekend.

down and the music beats for real.

"I'm excited," said cast member Olga Nacalaban. "I'm more anxious than nervous, partly because I don't have that many lines, but I know we will do really well."

Gillian Young, who plays Dr. Smith, the hip professor, did not participate in the dress rehearsal because of illness, but will make her acting debut this evening. "I'm scared as (expletive)," said Young. "This is my first time doing a play like this on a stage, in front of my peers."

Donte Hart, who plays one of the lead roles, echoes Young's apprehension.

"I was nervous tonight," said Hart.

"I just want to make it a good play and make it entertaining."

NSBE hopes that the musical provides more than entertainment. Spain stressed that in addition to the group's mission statement of positively impacting the community, NSBE wants to promote cultural awareness and different lifestyles. "The event itself exposes all levels and elements within a community," said Spain.

Another cast member, George Morgan III, expressed his wish for students to take the play seriously, partly because of the nature of the issues, and partly because of all the hard work and effort that the cast and

crew members have put into the play already.

"I just don't want students to brush it off," said Morgan. "I see people at Bruno's looking at the poster and walking right by. It really is a great play for all types of people."

The curtain goes up at 8 tonight with the doors opening at 7. The musical will also be performed Saturday and Sunday and Feb. 27-29. Tickets for the show are \$3 with Behrend ID and \$5 general admission.

In addition to their performances, students have the chance to listen to the cast members speak about the musical WREG 89.9 FM Saturday at 12:15 p.m.

## Inside



ALWAYS BELIEVING  
DANCE MARATHON 2004

### THON dances for kids with cancer

This weekend more than 650 students will dance for 48 hours to raise money for the Four Diamonds Fund.

FEATURES, Page 6

### Swimmers end regular season at invites

The Lions took on the Grove City Invitational this past weekend. Behrend now begins preparations for ECACs.

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### Are the Yankees ruining baseball?

An editorial examines the current state of baseball thanks to A-Rod's trade.

SPORTS, Page 9.

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in the Reed Union Building.

## Dance brings homecoming festivities to a close

by Scott Soltis  
assistant managing editor

Picture your high school prom without the tuxedos. Penn State Behrend held its first ever basketball Homecoming last Friday at the Avalon hotel in downtown Erie. The theme for the night was Midnight in Manhattan, and the event was planned by the Ohio Hall Council.

Students arrived around 8 p.m., when dinner was served. A buffet of salads, pasta, chicken and more was available for the \$20 charged per person to attend the evening. Following the dinner, Homecoming King and Queen, Dave Daquelente and Jeannie Roos led their dates on to the floor to begin the dancing. The dancing was periodically interrupted for door prizes ranging from meals at Kentucky Fried Chicken to a digital camera at the end of the night.

According to Jenna Boazzo, Ohio Hall Council President, there were 90 tickets sold and 88 in attendance that evening. The \$20 per ticket rate probably kept some Behrend students out of attendance, which hurt the event. Junior Zoe Rose, who attended the event, felt that even lowering the cost to \$15 would have boosted attendance.

The attendance was a sticking point for the evening. "I was somewhat upset that more students did not come out to celebrate," said Student Government Association Senator Alexander Henderson, "but all I can say is that they missed out on an excellent time."



PHOTO BY ROB FRANK BEHREND BEACON

Students danced the night away at Friday's homecoming dance, which capped off a week's worth of festivities.

Others were more pessimistic. Cross Country/Track athlete Michael Barlett had attended several Athletic Balls prior to Homecoming and compared the two. "I think that the venue (Avalon Hotel) was much nicer than where it's at for the athletic formal, but I feel turnout is what really killed the whole event," Barlett said. Others expressed disappointment about the attendance, but Boazzo stayed positive.

"I was hoping to break a hundred, but really for it being the first time and having sold 90 tickets I didn't think that was too bad," Boazzo said. Aside from the attendance there were few complaints. Attendees praised the food, most of the DJ's

"I feel turnout is what really killed the event."

selections, and the general atmosphere.

Boazzo feels that there is room to build from this year and hopefully improve by working on the structure of the event and its planning. "It's nice to see that despite all the criticism and lack of support we managed to have a successful turnout," said Boazzo.

Some key areas of criticism the Hall Council will be addressing were the lack of structure and the size of the Hall Council for the

magnitude of the event.

To silence these critics, Boazzo, Amy Caskey, Ryan Herzing and Allison Kemerer submitted a constitution this week to SGA to have the Homecoming Committee be officially recognized as a club on campus.

This would also make the group eligible for SGA funds that it did not qualify for this year's event.

"We decided to make it a separate organization so we can get more people involved," Boazzo said regarding the decision to apply for club status. "We just wanted to see this become one of the things here at Behrend."