

# Tap Dancing at the Jewel

By Christina Waters

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**TAP TAP TAP** Bianca Chesnut, as Darcy Fadham (center) leads the ensemble in *Who's Got Me*

**T**he 42nd Street Golden Age of musicals infuses this ambitious world premiere, **Who's Got Me?** by **Jeffrey Scharf**, about a family cabaret troupe from Peoria who want to take Broadway by storm.

There's even a break-a-leg moment, backstage rivalry, and battling leading players who eventually become....well, you can guess.

And through it all—over a dozen crisp, clever song and dance numbers—you'll find yourself falling in love with this rousing, feel-good production.



Yes, it's got every time-honored cliché and showbiz complication known to Broadway thrown into its can-do spirit, smartly powered by ensemble tap dancing that would make Ruby Keeler (Google her if you're under 45) smile.

Tap dancing! The audience was treated to an overture at the start that ran through a brisk medley of what were about to

enjoy, terrifically performed by the trio led by music director **Luke Shepherd** on piano, **Matt Bohn** on bass and **Zack Olsen** drums.

The show's creator, Santa Cruzan Jeffrey Scharf leaves no cabaret stereotype unturned in his *almost* predictable show within a show plotline. Soft-hearted producers, dueling divas, heart-broken understudies, all of these get their own turn in the spotlight, along with the age-old conflict between the slow pace of small-town life and the breakneck speed of the Big City. Peoria vs. Broadway. Can they. Can they coexist? You'll see.

The actual star of this polished production is multi-talented Scharf himself who provides the show with an endless parade of catchy tunes with catchy lyrics to match. Think *A Chorus Line*. With only a few moments of soft focus, this alternating fiction/reality plot keeps us engaged and entranced throughout the 1 hour 45 minutes show.

Every performer is excellent. The impressive **Cody Cooley** as leading man Joe Alexander, creator of the Alexander family's musical comedy, is up to his energetic central role from start to finish. As his loyal siblings, Jimmy and John Alexander, **Zach Padlo** and **Ryan Sammonds** are spot on.

I was won over by the polish of singer/dancer/actor **Adria**

**Swan** who plays the fourth member of the Peoria cabaret troupe. As casting agent Lindsey Walden, **Sarah Hadassah Negrón** is brilliant. Choreographer **Elle May Patterson** inspired her players to Broadway-quality heights and Scenic Designer **Skip Epperson** outdid himself with the production's versatile set.

A picky critic might wish for a more emotional shift at the story's 11th hour to lead into the ensemble toe-tapper at the end. I also wondered what happened to the concept of spotlights, especially during the flatly lit first Act. But there *is* a rousing "hell, yes!" moment, when our frustrated hero Joe realizes that he might just have a professional second chance, and he's not going to miss it.

Does **Who's Got Me?** have the white-knuckle political backdrop of *Cabaret* or *The Sound of Music*? No. Or a soul-baring solo, such as *Phantom's* The Music of the Night? Not really. But it does showcase with remarkable vivacity how a writer/composer with enough talent and tenacity can whip up something as impressive as **Who's Got Me?** And director/producer **Julie James** was smart enough to recognize Scharf's creativity and program this show for the holiday season.

Only an anti-musical Scrooge would fail to get caught up in



the infectious spirit of this charmer. Absolutely this show is for everyone of every age—bring your family! Only a few days left to enjoy the sight of a dozen professionals singing, cavorting, scheming, and tap dancing like it's 1938. So let's go on with the show! **Rowland Rebele** would have loved it.

**Who's Got Me? – Book, lyrics and music by Jeffrey Scharf.**  
Directed by **Julie James**. Performed by Jewel Theatre Company.

**If you go:**

When: Runs through Dec. 23

Where: **COLLIGAN THEATER** at the Tannery Arts Center  
1010 River Street, Santa Cruz

**Tickets.**

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