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At the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House on Saturday, July 8, opening night of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, the performances were terrific and exciting. And although **Allan Ulrich**'s review said this was the first time live music accompanied all the eight performing troupes, the miracle of it was smooth and mostly seamless moves from one segment to another, including changes of musicians for each group of dancers.

But even before the show started, the preperformance scene in the lobby was remarkable. The troupes are all local; the dancers have many family members and friends, and they were there, especially on opening day of the festival (which continues this weekend, July 15-16). And as one entered the lobby, the hum of people arriving was multicultural, multihued, multilingual, a whirl of patterns and ornament.

The next afternoon, driving back to the city from a party in the East Bay, I saw a billboard (I can't remember what it was advertising) that boasted of San Francisco as a city for all kinds of people and all manner of opinions. The billboard was mostly red; more appropriately, it could have included an image of the scene in the Opera House lobby, the city at its best.

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