



Students sharpen improvisation skills in upcoming show

ABBY OLCESE
Entertainment Editor

The lights come up on a group of janitors sweeping the floor, setting the stage and dancing to the Squirrel Nut Zippers' "Wash Jones." Moments later, the same actors sit at a pair of tables, playing a squabbling group of prekindergarten Sunday-schoolers and their exhausted teacher, followed by scenes from a singles club, a quilt guild and a couples therapy session.

No, this isn't "Saturday Night Live" or "Mad TV." It's the PSU Theater Department's latest show, "Macaroni and Jell-O," an improvised set of scenes centered on a church. The show will be performed by Cynthia Allan's improv acting ensemble at 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday in the PSU Studio Theater in Grubbs Hall.

Allan offers the improv acting ensemble class only after she's developed a concept for a show.

"I first started doing improv shows in 1998 when I was working in South Carolina," Allan said. "Since I've been here, I've done two new shows, one called 'American Edit,' and this one."

"I started thinking of this almost two years ago," Allan said. The idea to set scenes in a church community came from her own life.

"My dad was a minister, so I grew up around all the petty politics in the church," Allan said. "The show isn't about religion so much as just about people trying to work together. They try to be good, but they just can't help but be human."

Todd Hoover, graduate student in communication education, was in "American Edit" in 2004 and performs in "Macaroni and Jell-O."

"As an actor, improvisation really makes you rely and be focused on what you're doing," Hoover said. "It's nice to be able to not have to work from a book."

Other students in Allan's class, like Austin Laverty, haven't had as much experience.

"I did improv for forensics in high school," Laverty, junior in communication, said. "There were a lot of people, including me, who weren't very confident at first, but now we're more confident, and we're closer friends, too."

Laverty says the hardest part is staying fresh in each performance, saying it's hard to "make up new material every day."

Chelsea Smith says the experience has given her a boost of self-confidence.

"I did a workshop with Dr. Allan last summer, and I was horrible," Smith said. "But now, my confidence has definitely increased."

Daley Leintz, senior in communication, says she's enjoyed playing multiple roles in the show.

"I've loved the different range of characters I've played in the kid scenes, the picnic scenes, all of them have been lots of fun," she said.

Bekah Grieb, senior in communication, says her experience has taught her to look more closely at the world around her.

"You pay more attention to things," Grieb said. "You see situations in life that can help you with your improv."

Allan says she's had difficulty balancing the roles she has to play offstage as a writer, director and teacher.

"Sometimes it's hard to come as a director and know what I want, but also know that it's a learning experience for the students," Allan said.

But through all the challenges, Allan says she's proud of the way things have turned out.

"I was very nervous that nothing would read well, or it wouldn't communicate well to the students," Allan said. "But I was impressed that they took to the choreography scenes, and understood the concept of how to work and move with the music."

In conjunction with the show, the cast will be holding a food drive for Wesley House in Pittsburg. Audience members are encouraged to bring macaroni, Jell-O or items that go along with it.



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Thursday, April 26 - 8 p.m.

Friday, April 27 - 8 p.m.

Saturday, April 28 - 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 29 - 2 p.m.

Grubbs Hall Studio Theater

Tickets:

\$8 - General public

\$6 - Faculty and staff

\$5 - Under 17/Over 65

PSU students free with ID



Above: Roy Hatcher, left, contemplates relationship issues with Jodie Buster during couples therapy.

Left: Todd Hoover, right, greets Austin Laverty at the beginning of the church's council meeting.

Right: From left, Todd Hoover, Lucy Miller-Downing, Daley Leintz, and Jodie Buster tussle over too much Jell-O at a church pot luck dinner.



Photos by Raymond Hillegas



Arctic Monkeys' new album surpasses expectations

Last year, the Arctic Monkeys proved they were a force to be reckoned with in their debut album, "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," the fastest-selling record in British music history, and one that ended up at the top of many critics' best of 2006 lists on both sides of the pond.

Now, the four-piece from Sheffield has (dare I say it?) produced an even better LP with "Favourite Worst Nightmare."

The tracks are simultaneously bright and tough, like a mosh pit



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an adrenaline-charged tune that melds raw power with something akin to Franz Ferdinand's suits-and-spats rock. It manages to be rough and slick at the same time, which is quite a feat.

There's a nice sampling of songs on "Favourite Worst Nightmare." The first four tracks are immensely danceable, reminiscent of the band's debut, followed by a couple of slower songs, the

in a sunny field.

Alex Turner and crew get things off to a rocking good start with "Brianstorm."

mature-sounding "Fluorescent Adolescent" and "Only Ones Who Know."

These are followed with a return to form in "Do Me a Favour" and "This House Is a Circus," but these songs are different than those offered at the beginning. Somewhere, a switch was made, and what we get here are much more distinct music and lyrics.

"We're forever unfulfilled, and can't think why," Turner sings with frustration on "This House Is a Circus." I don't know if Turner knows it, but these words speak as much to a generation used to shallow instant-gratification as they speak to the band.

Overall, there's so much energy, focus and power poured into "Favourite Worst Nightmare"

that I have to wonder how these guys could keep it up. It's been a little more than a year since "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," and already the band has finished a second release that, far from the sophomore slump feared and suffered by most bands, is actually better than its debut. "Favourite Worst Nightmare" will please the Arctic Monkeys' following, while also serving as a great introduc-



The Arctic Monkeys, 2007

tion to those unfamiliar with the music. I just hope the band can keep from burning out at this rate. It would be a sad thing indeed to see so promising a band break down when it's clear it has great possibilities.

take5

A list of this week's top five in entertainment

Movies:

1. "Disturbia," Dreamworks, \$13 million.
2. "Fracture," New Line, \$11 million.
3. "Blades of Glory," Dreamworks, \$7.8 million.
4. "Vacancy," Screen Gems, \$7.6 million.
5. "Meet the Robinsons," Disney, \$7 million.

Television:

1. "American Idol (Tuesday)," Fox.
2. "American Idol (Wednesday)," Fox.
3. "House," Fox.
4. "Grey's Anatomy," ABC.
5. "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," CBS.

Music:

1. Various Artists, "Now 24," EMI.
2. Tim McGraw, "Let it Go," Curb.
3. Akon, "Konvicted," Motown.
4. Bright Eyes, "Cassadega," Saddle Creek.
5. Timbaland, "Timbaland Presents Shock Value," Mosley/Blackground.

up next

This week's new movies, music & DVDs

Theatrical Releases:

Friday, April 27

- "The Invisible"
- "Next"
- "The Condemned"
- "Kickin' It Old Skool"

DVD Releases:

Tuesday, May 1

- "The Hitcher"
- "Little Children"
- "Alpha Dog"
- "Old Joy"
- "Will and Grace: Season Six"

CD Releases:

Tuesday, May 1

- Tori Amos, "American Doll Posse"
- Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, "Baby 81"
- Ne-Yo, "Because of You"
- Rush, "Snakes and Arrows"
- Dinosaur Jr., "Beyond"
- Feist, "The Reminder"
- Frog Eyes, "Tears of the Valedictorian"

onstage

Wednesday, May 9

George Clinton and the Parliament Funkadelic - The Crossroads, Kansas City

Thursday, May 10

Ozark Mountain Daredevils - The Gillioz Theater, Springfield

Friday, May 11

The Killers - City Market, Kansas City

Bo Diddley - Gem Theater, Kansas City

Minus the Bear, Chinup

Chinup and the Honorary Title - The Granada Theater, Lawrence

Brad Paisley, Taylor Swift,

Jack Ingram and Kellie Pickler - Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Kansas City

Kill Hannah - Remington's Niteclub, Springfield

Eric Lindell - Knuckleheads Saloon, Kansas City

Saturday, May 12

The Honda Civic Tour - Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Kansas City

Sunday, May 13

Damien Rice - Uptown Theater, Kansas City

Leon Redbone - Knuckleheads Saloon, Kansas City

Pierce the Veil and Portugal, the Man - The Foundry, Joplin