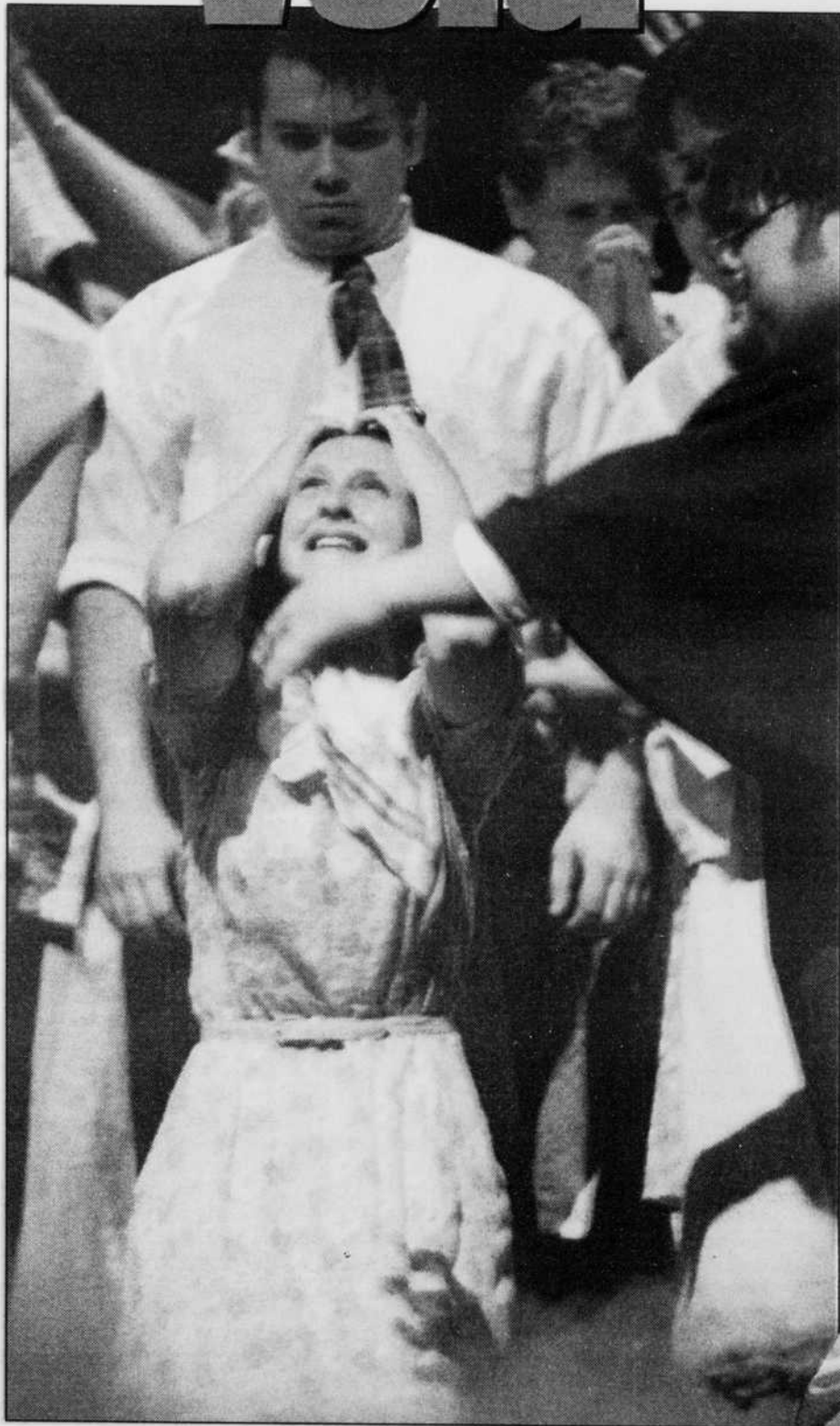


# Filling the void



University theater and music major Megan Smith pursues her primary passion, stage acting

By Jack Clifford  
Oregon Daily Emerald

**I**magine an empty space. You must fill this void with your dreams, your beliefs or maybe your realities. You must move others with your insights, you must make a statement. Floods of fear might strike if your thoughts stall or your visions fade.

And the empty space will remain. Megan Smith appreciates the power of this image, one that author and playwright Peter Brook fully dissects in his book "The Empty Space." Yet, the University theater student is confident enough to step into the spotlight and take her chances.

"It's a big undertaking to look and say 'What do I want to say with this space? What do I want to put on this stage so people who come and see this piece that I make will go away with the knowledge that I expressed some idea?'" speculates the fifth-year senior. "Theater is not a world for someone who just kind of likes to do it for a hobby. Theater is for people who really are passionate about it."

Smith's passion for acting crystallized at age 16. In a high school play produced entirely by students, the California native played a young Jewish girl who has lost most of her family in the Holocaust and then finds her father and sister in New York City. The Jewish citizens in Smith's hometown of Davis came out in strong support for the show's message, she says.

"Theater enriches the community, and that was my first lesson in how incredible it is to be able to put on a production that will enrich the lives of people in a community," Smith stresses. "It's a cliché, but it's very true."

During conversation, Smith slips in the word "commu-

nity" where most people might use "I" or "me." Instead of talking about individual experiences when asked about personal accomplishments in Eugene and at the University, she focuses on group projects.

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She brings up The Pocket Playhouse, run by University students, which puts on four shows a term. Smith laughs about long nights of "dorking out" with her fellow Absolute Improv members, doing shots of tequila and "just talking about stupid sketch comedy, stuff that would

be really funny to put on stage."

Smith even talks about the ones who have made it, those famous actors who inspire her. She names Judy Densch, who "respects her art but keeps perspective. She knows that she's just another actor." Densch, Emma Thompson and Cate Blanchett, Smith muses, are "women with integrity who manage to show grace under pressure."

Pressure. Yeah, Smith knows pressure. At age 17, she left home and immersed herself in school; from day one she has been a double major in theater and music. Smith can play the piano and the double bass, but she also enjoys ballet dancing and

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PHOTOS BY  
NICK MEDLEY

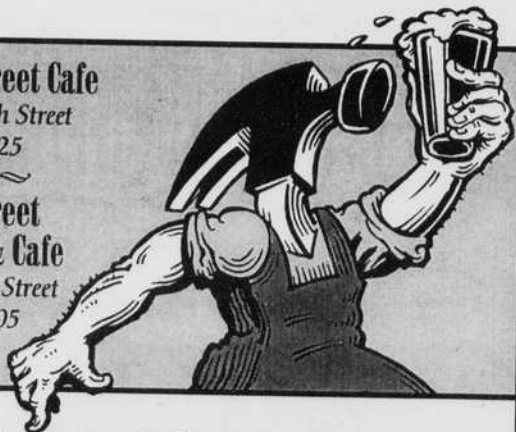
Theater and music major Megan Smith plays the lead role in the University Theatre's production of 'Dark of the Moon.' She is also a founding member of the comedy troupe Absolute Improv.



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