



Members of the comedy improv troupe WYMPROV! clown around with props from their show.

Courtesy

Local improv performers follow whim of audiences

Several troupes in Eugene perform improv, including Comedy Sportz, Absolute Improv and WYMPROV!

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Harvesting eggplants with a chainsaw. Using a stapler as an electric razor. Having your body moved around by complete strangers. Dressing in a giant foam rubber cross.

These are just a few of the situations local comedy improvisation groups have dealt with onstage in front of a live audience.

Popularized by the British television show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" and its eventual American counterpart, improv comedy has become a popular form of entertainment in Eugene. With a number of troupes performing around town in both regular and sporadic intervals, there are plenty of opportunities to witness the spectacle that is improv comedy.

"It's like going to the circus and watching people on the high wire," WYMPROV! comedy troupe member Sally Sheklow said. "You get this kind of 'whahh!' feel when you think the performer is about to fall, even though you know they'll be all right."

Relying on audience participation, improv shows consist of a series of games and exercises that the

performers go through based on random suggestions from the crowd. Since the performers have no idea what the audience will suggest, the entire performance is created on the spot. Absolute Improv member Kimberly Bates believes spontaneity is part of the attraction to improv.

"I think there is something really amazing about watching people doing things right off the cuff," Bates said. "It really has a fresh, unplanned quality to it."

While most of the improv groups in Eugene perform whenever they have the time or a venue, one group faces neither of these concerns. Comedy Sportz, which operates a storefront theater at 1030 Oak St., has performances at 8 p.m. every Friday and Saturday night. A national comedy team, Comedy Sportz was founded in 1984 in Milwaukee, Wis., and has since started troupes all over the country.

"We started here in Eugene back in 1999," Eugene Comedy Sportz executive producer Kent McCarty said. "Business has been up and down since then, though it's never popular enough for our taste."

Pitting two teams culled from the troupe's roster of performers against each other in a variety of games, Comedy Sportz is a competitive improv show in which the audience awards points to the best performing team. Other than the points and the presence of a referee, the show has

little to do with actual sporting events, McCarty said.

"There is often some confusion about that," he added.

Though Comedy Sportz is the most regular performance, it is not by any means the only one. WYMPROV!, a four member, all-woman comedy group, has been performing in Eugene since 1991. In a performance style usually dominated by men, WYMPROV! attempts to break down some of the stereotypes, Sheklow said.

"We're not the usual image of women in popular culture," Sheklow said. "In most improv shows, women are usually the pregnant one or the bitch. But there is so much material out there that isn't explored because of that view of women. There are so many possible images of women."

Improv also plays an important role in a different way for other performers around town.

"I think doing improv helps me develop confidence in myself," Bates said. "It's just a good way to engage with people. It really helps me talk to people without feeling awkward or having to scramble for words."

But the most important part of improv, for many performers, is the comedy itself.

"We all need to laugh," said Sheklow. "We need to laugh a lot."

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailymerald.com.

Green Garter Band celebrates 20 years of music mayhem, fun

The athletic band features top musicians and songs ranging from rock to rap and will perform tonight

By Natasha Chilingirian
Pulse Reporter

University football, basketball and volleyball games gain much of their spirit from band music, and the Green Garter Band plays a central role in generating lively and recognizable tunes at athletic events. The band, comprised of 12 advanced student musicians, will celebrate its 20th anniversary Tuesday with a special performance at Beall Hall.

The Green Garter Band is the core group of the Oregon Marching Band and the Oregon Basketball Band. In

addition, the group performs at women's home basketball and volleyball games, plus a number of community and University events. Since its 1983 debut, the band has grown from its casual set-up into a formal group of musicians who serve as role models for fellow Oregon Marching Band members.

Green Garter Band baritone saxophone player Laura Arthur, who has studied the history of the band, said the group began when eight members of the Oregon Marching Band named the Emerald Dixieland Jazz Ensemble (EDGE for short) entertained the rest of the marching band as they waited for games to begin. When the octet was asked to perform at a private event, they added three more players and became the Green Garter Band.

Several rumors exist as to where the

band's name originated. Arthur said it was possibly named after a 1930s band with the same name, or after a 1970s University basketball band named the Green Garden Band.

Green Garter Band alto saxophone player and bandleader Brian Silva, who has spent four years in the group, said the original members actually wore green garters on their arms.

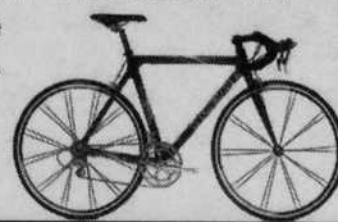
After two to three years of private gigs, the University athletic department asked the band to perform at women's volleyball and basketball games, and awarded the musicians with scholarships that covered half their tuition (they presently receive a full scholarship). Trumpet player Dave Chartrey was the official student founder of the band, and Steve Paul, the associate director of bands at the

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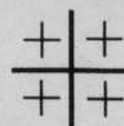
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