

Get Wild and Wing It

Wymprov performs without a net.

Picture yourself onstage. Another actor speaks and now it's your turn. There's no script, so you flounder for what to say next. Sound like a nightmare? Not if you're into improvisational theater. The improv stage is the one place where winging it is wonderful, and the players involved in improv comedy thrive on the uncharted territory.

For 12 years, four local women have been working that stage as WYMPROV!, an improv comedy troupe. They'll share the stage with the only other known West coast-based all-female troupe — Ashland's Hamazons.

What's improv's appeal? It's impossible to see the same show twice. There's no memorizing lines and no rehearsals. And improv is a live performance, subject only to the participants' own creative limits.

For players and audience, it's memorable to be part of something existing only in the moment, with no do-overs and a constant threat of the whole scene collapsing with a misplaced line. It's like standing in front of a blank canvas every performance. Whether it's a masterpiece or a flop, it gets erased at the end of the night.

Debby Martin, a WYMPROV! member along with Sally Sheklow, Enid Lefton, and Vicki Silvers, described WYMPROV's style as "short form." The players ask the audience questions like, "Where do you go on vacation?" The audience shouts answers and the first one heard sets the scene. When dialogue falters, games like "Tip of the Tongue" keep the ball rolling, with the audience shouting out words to fill in. "Each game is about five minutes," said Martin. "We'll set up each one and tell them what's going on and when we

need suggestions." The game "Paper and Pen" gives audience members a chance to share a line of dialogue. "There's all sorts of different games, literally hundreds of them, but each has the common denominator that there's audience involvement," Martin said.

Unscripted, uncensored input means things can quickly get outrageous. "It's fun when it gets wild and crazy," Martin laughed. "People are really amazed that we make everything up!" Anything goes for subject matter. "Sometimes it's political, sometimes it's not political at all, depending on the crowd," Martin said.



WYMPROV!

WOW HALL, 8 pm, Saturday, April 30/ \$15
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Adding the Hamazons to the mix spices things up. "It's a jolt of energy to join forces with another group that you're not used to," said Martin. WYMPROV! shows are family appropriate. "When there's kids in the audience they're not going to shout out things they might shout out if it's a 21-plus audience," Martin explained. "As children, you grow up improvising. You pick up a stick and it turns into who knows what. Children enjoy [improv] a lot." And remember kids, in this venue, you don't have to raise your hand first before you speak!

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