

VLT
The Very Little Theatre presents

 **Dead Man's Cell Phone**

An incessantly ringing cell phone in a quiet café. A stranger at the next table who has had enough. And a dead man—with a lot of loose ends. A wildly imaginative comedy about the value of human connection in a technologically obsessed world.

By Sarah Ruhl | Directed by Patrick

July 29-31*, Aug. 4-7*, 11-13

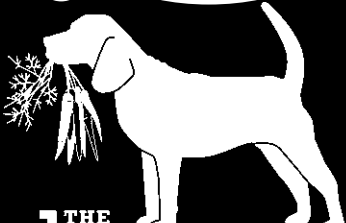
Curtain at 8 pm Thurs.-Sat. | 2 pm for *Sunday Matinees

Tickets: \$15 (\$10 for Thursday)
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Theater BY BRIT MCGINNIS



PHOTO BY ROB SYDOR WWW.DIGITALLATTE.COM

Melissa Hicks (in gorilla suit) and Dale Light rehearse "Erotic Taxidermist"

Send In The People

No Shame Eugene brings spontaneity and random talent to Eugene theater scene

First rule of No Shame: Everything you do on stage must be original.

Second rule of No Shame: Every act must be five minutes or shorter. Go over the time allowed, and your lights and sound will be cut off.

Last Rule of No Shame: Don't break anything, laws included.

Other than that, go nuts.

This is the formula for No Shame Eugene, a local chapter of the No Shame theater movement that has spread across the country. It's not a troupe or a company. There are no auditions. None of the performers are paid. The people who coordinate the event are just that — coordinators. Simply anyone can show up to a Thursday night workshop, or even a monthly Friday night performance, and do their thing in front of an audience.

"We have people who have done professional shows, who have really impressive résumés for performance, and then we have people who literally have never been on stage," says Jeff Geiger, artistic director of No Shame Eugene.

The first No Shame group originated in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1986. It was seen as a response to the University of Iowa Playwright's Workshop, which requires a piece to be approved before being cast and performed. Some people considered such a rule to be negatively exclusive.

Geiger describes seeing the No Shame Iowa City performances in 1998 and feeling drawn to the diversity of talent on display. "[There was] a mix between amazing, mind-blowing pieces and pieces that were either disturbing or just terrible," he says. Geiger decided to bring the concept to Eugene.

Weekly workshops are held Thursdays at a space lent to No Shame by the Lord Leebrick Theatre. The coordinators provide a minimalist set for the volunteer performers, who block out the action of their pieces with lawn chairs and card tables. A hefty metal

moving dolly has served as the most utilized prop in the group's history.

The City of Eugene allows No Shame to use the downtown Atrium lobby at 10th and Olive as a performance space the first Friday of every month. In another impressive display of making do with less, No Shame's coordinators arrange for the audience to sit in borrowed chairs from offices within the Atrium. The first fifteen acts to sign up for a time slot at 7:30 pm get to go on that night. If you're too late to sign up, you're out of luck.

Family friendly acts are placed first. But after a while, the *Jaws* theme is played (a tribute to the group's mascot), signaling the arrival of more mature content.

The phrase that pops up a lot in No Shame Eugene is "anyone can play." People who talk about No Shame often say this open attitude is their favorite part about participating. The three main rules are strictly enforced, but a performer who wants to have an act in the Friday night show doesn't even need to attend a workshop before signing up. Past shows have featured sketch comedy as well as mime, clown acts and a dance by a giant centaur puppet.

The July 21 workshop consisted of actors working quirky sketches with names like "Megalomaniacal Gas Attendants" and "Erotic Taxidermist." Cyrus Pierce, No Shame's youngest-ever performer at 6-and-a-half years old, spun around on an office chair and told knock-knock jokes to the audience. Every act was engaging in its own way, with a freewheeling atmosphere usually only seen in Charlie Chaplin films or "Whose Line is it Anyway?" To the volunteer performers, this opportunity to don their theatrical hats is sacred. They're absolutely free to mess up, keep going and try to make art that's fun to see.

But it has to clock in at less than five minutes. The buzzer stays silent for no one.

EW

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