

UNDEAD WYMPROV!

The foursome bring their improv to OCT

"The four of us are kind of like sisters," Vicki Silvers tells me over coffee pre-snowstorm at Noisette Pastry Kitchen, with her other "sister" Debbie Martin in tow. She's speaking of the four women who make up WYMPROV!, a pioneering comedy improv group whose legacy in Eugene dates back more than two decades to its "Debut and Farewell" show at Agate Hall. Martin nods, adding that the foursome is supportive of each other on stage and off, getting together for frequent dinners and continuing "to get together and play."

EW hasn't caught up with the troupe since W was president and since then, WYMPROV! has done few public shows, focusing mainly on private events. That public hiatus comes to an end (for one night only), Friday, Dec. 13, when the members takes their think-on-their-feet skills to Oregon Contemporary Theatre.

"It's the perfect venue for us," Silvers says.

"We couldn't be more pleased," Martin adds.

The quartet has been practicing because, as Martin describes it, keeping your improv funny bone sharp is like going to the gym — if you don't use it, it might atrophy into something considerably less funny. Some of those exercises include avoiding "Blocking." Blocking includes using "no" as a response or asking questions, which can send a comedic setup straight to the grave. This is easier than it sounds, they say, because improv is about expressing what immediately comes to mind.

Reflecting on 20-plus years of improv together, Silvers says, "It's been cool being four women." The duo explains that it's easier to avoid the common pitfalls that women face in co-ed improv troupes, like the "mother or whore syndrome," where women are frequently typecast as one or the other.

But perhaps most of all, the troupe sees value in its comedy as a healthy habit. "Laughter extends your life," Silvers says. ■

WYMPROV! performs 8 pm Friday, Dec. 13, at Oregon Contemporary Theatre: \$10.



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