

Get Crazy

The Puppet Regime opens their 1995-96 season with a collection of skits ranging from the absurd to the really nuts. So, in case you haven't figured it out yet, don't expect anything normal.

LUCY ARNOLD Features Editor

"Wacky, silly, kooky, out there, spastic, groovy, neat, cool, swell and more fun than brushing your teeth with wire gauze any day."

That's the second most appropriate description of the Puppet Regime's new show, "Mandatory Picnic," written by Jayce T. Tromsness, Charles R. Harper and George S. Mount. The best way to describe it can be summed up in two words: you can't.

"It's a really hard one to describe," said sophomore Nate Whitworth, one of the actors. "It's basically Saturday Night Live-kind of stuff. Some of it is really wild, off-the-wall stuff."

"Mandatory Picnic" is not exactly your basic cohesive one-main-plot kind of play.

"It's about 15 different scenes varying from a talk show host turned angel of death to three people talking in a car called 'Stream of Consciousness,'" said junior Patrick Holland, director of "Mandatory Picnic."

Graduate student Sarah Schnadig elaborated on her role as the transformed talk show host.

"I'm doing a 20-minute monologue that was written for me," she said. "It's about a woman who's a host for a kid's show. She's basically losing it."

"Mandatory Picnic" is being run by the student organization Puppet Regime.

"We produce, direct and run the entire show ourselves," Whitworth said. "The university helps by giving us the space. It's open to anybody, not just theater majors."

This particular production has been full of opportunities for undergraduates. Seven out of the nine cast members, as well as the director, are undergraduates.

"I'm the first undergraduate to direct at the Puppet Regime in three years," Holland said. "With this show, my intent was to get a lot of undergraduates involved."

Students involved with "Mandatory Picnic" are gaining experience as they work with more other actors in a sort of "mentoring"

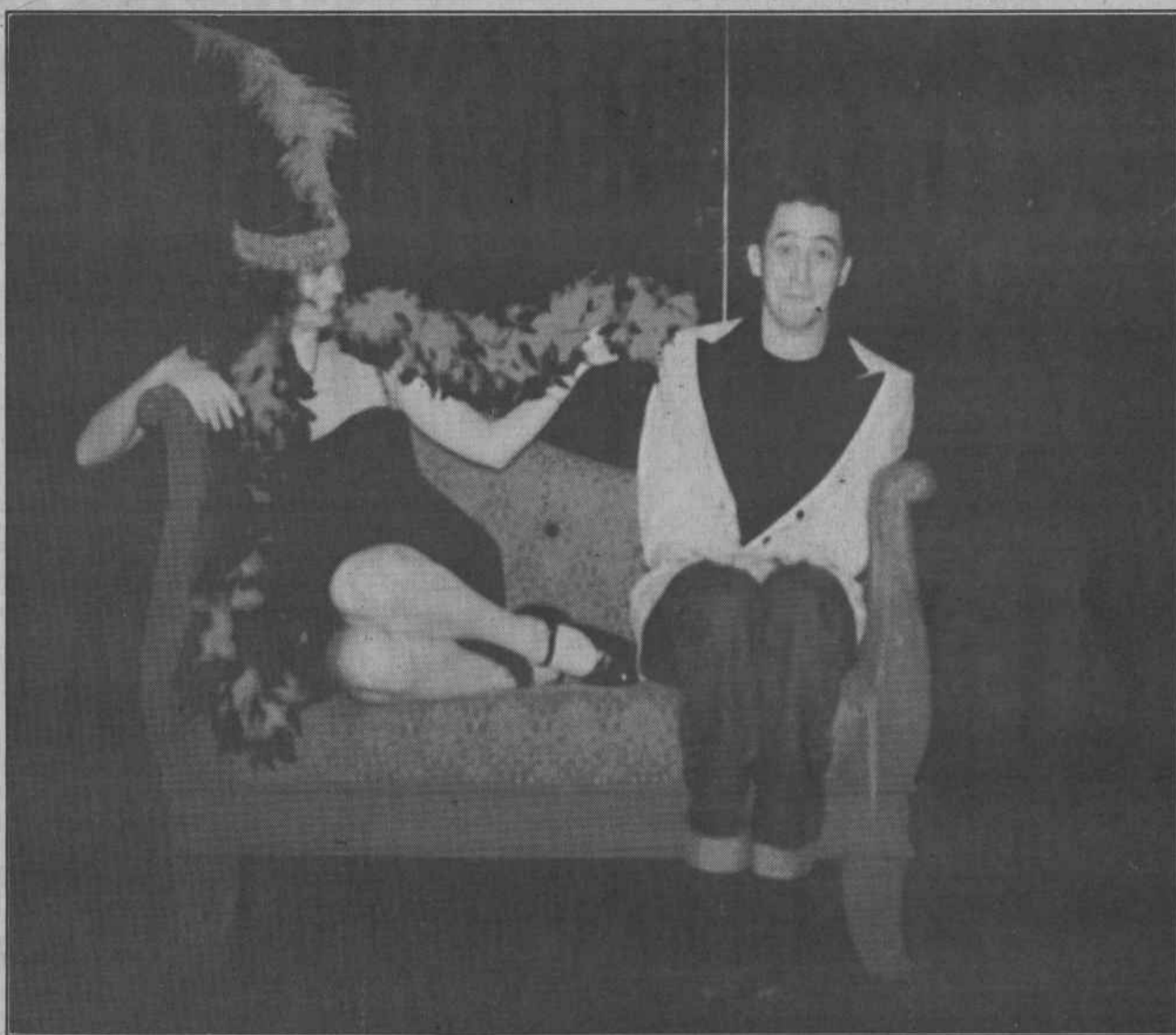
program. The more experienced people act as supports and information bases for the less experienced performers. Holland in particular has enjoyed the benefits of this program as he ventures into his first full-length play as director.

"A lot of times they'll point out something I wouldn't have noticed," he said. "It's good on both ends having a graduate student or a more experienced actor around."

The cast of "Mandatory Picnic" includes Janie Haddad, Matt Engle, Sarah Schnadig, Naté Whitworth, Patrick Baxeley, Tawnya Pamplin, Amy Dietz, Ali Freeman and Christa Twyford.

The show opens today at 8 p.m. at Benson Theatre. Benson Theatre is located on the corner of South Bull Street and Whaley Street, across from the Bates House on the USC campus. "Mandatory Picnic" will run through Sunday and all performances will begin at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$3 for students and \$5 for the general public. First-come, first-seated.

"It's just craziness," Holland said.



PUPPET REGIME

At top: Matt Engle finds himself being seduced by yet another Tina (Janie Haddad). Above: Nate Whitworth, Patrick Baxeley, Ali Freeman and Amy Dietz are all twisted up in some wild positions. It's a "Mandatory Picnic" thing.

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