

# Improv from page 1B

Improv troupe 'Totally Unrehearsed/Unrehearsed Theatre, the seven-player house improv troupe.

Improv means finding moments of humor and connection — with the ensemble and with the audience — as players take characters into uncharted territory. There are standard improv games and routines, often fueled by suggestions from the audience, but every scene can be different.

It's hard work. The off-the-cuff sketches are not played strictly for laughs, but laughs are generated when actors use their wits to leap over pitfalls and dodge gaffes as their scenes progress.

"When you try hard, it never works," said Hauser, a Southfield resident who has also done stand-up comedy.

Unlike stand-up, usually a solo venture, comedy improv is a group effort. Bell-Brege and

Hauser stress cooperation, supporting others and being affirmative rather than denying.

"The criticism 'denial,' used by both teachers and other students, is often heard when those rules are broken in class.

"You don't have to have conflict. If you're constantly arguing it stops things," said Bell-Brege, of Novi.

Upstaging fellow actors is not allowed.

"If somebody was good up there then the troupe was bad," said Kirk Hanley of Farmington Hills, a 'Totally Unrehearsed' player who stepped in at the end of a beginning-level class.

Students in the intermediate class said they find improv's play-acting and fun, supportive environment a good antidote to everyday pressures.

"It brings out the kid in you sometimes," said Sal Rubino of St. Clair Shores.

"This is probably the best thing I've done for myself in a long time," said Colleen Coughlin of Berkeley. "It's been a lot of fun."

"There's a lot more cooperation and less competition between the people," said Randy Hippler of Warren, comparing improv to stand-up. Hippler has had experience with both, and said improv "gives you an opportunity to get more laughs than with the prepared material."

After warmups and an exercise called "appliance symphony," in which actors imitated different household appliances in "harmony," stage entrances were rehearsed, and students took turns practicing master-of-ceremonies duties.

The class talked about how to handle lewd suggestions from the audience. Play off it, they were told, instead of it.

But when a bawdy take on a

scene in freeze tag, an improv game, yielded laughter, Hauser clarified: If it fits the scene, go with it, but if it's crudeness for its own sake, avoid it.

Toward the end of the intermediate class, Dan Snyder, another 'Totally Unrehearsed' trouper, dropped in. He was asked what happens if he is completely stumped on stage.

"It's not about going up there with something in mind, said Snyder, of Garden City. "If you go up there with something in mind it usually doesn't work."

For more information about 'Totally Unrehearsed Theatre or the improv classes at the Comedy Castle, call the 'Totally Unrehearsed' hot line at (810) 988-0055.

A four-week beginning improv class is set to begin May 18 at a cost of \$100; a four-week intermediate class, at \$125, will be organized after that.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HEAVLEY

Teachers: Gilda Hauser of Southfield (left) and Karen Bell-Brege of Novi teach comedy improvisation at the Comedy Castle. They are part of the seven-member improv troupe 'Totally Unrehearsed Theatre.'

# CCS from page 1B

choice of six different car companies. The Birmingham resident's clay models and drawings of 21st century vehicles take-off on the style of today's Nissan sports car.

As a graphic communications major, Alexandra Smith, 26 of Bloomfield Hills, could be creating promotional material for

Burata and Kim's products and vehicles. At Visual Services in Bloomfield Hills she works on large graphic design projects for Ford Motor Company and Beaumont Hospital. Smith earned a bachelor's degree in advertising at Michigan State University before coming to CCS. She will have samples of her brochures

from a promotion design class in the show including a package for Camp Milkakow, a fictional camp for kids who've grown up never seeing a farm. Also on display will be a green and purple poster on child abuse bearing her version "Monday's Child is Fair of Face."

"The message on the poster is

that not everything is happy and pretty," said Smith, a graduating senior.

Katherine Naini knows exactly what she wants for her future. After graduating from CCS this May, Naini will study for a master's degree at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills. Eventually, she plans to pursue a career in the fine arts in New York City. Work from her Face Value series, dealing with pre-conceived notions and the power

of perception, will be in the CCS show. Her process for arriving at a finished product is innovative.

"I start by shooting black and white film then I cut and collage negatives together and hand apply the color with paints. After that I do a Polaroid transfer of the final image onto print-making paper and then hand mark the surface," said Naini of West Bloomfield. Other Eccentric area seniors in the exhibit

include: Deirdre Heindl, Juanquin Bryant and Jason McCombs, Farmington Hills; Bethany Ayres, Birmingham; Jason Cowell, Rochester Hills; Dave Crawford, Birmingham; Damian Fagan and Howard Moss, Southfield; Edward Foley, Melissa McKay, Richard Thompson and Bueung Jung, West Bloomfield; Hiep Dinh, Bloomfield Hills; Jennifer Saville, Rochester; Stephanie Scheaffer, Farmington.

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