

# New York Play Uses Therapy, Real Life to Entertain

By Christine Kearney

**NEW YORK (Reuters) Monday, April 5, 2004** — Think you need a therapist? How about seeing one who takes your life and puts it on stage in front of a New York theater audience? A zany new offBroadway show, “This is Your Ridiculous Life,” uses professional psychotherapists onstage to interview members of the audience. Their life stories then are used as material for improvised comedy skits. Director and cast member David Nackman says the provocative show produces universal stories with a New York flavor each night. “A lot of people who live and visit New York have an immediate sense that they have entered a crazy zone,” he said. “There is so much bizarreness and craziness in New York and in this show we have a way of unleashing that.”



Previews this weekend were met with howls of laughter from the audience. In one, an audience member named Stella described playing childhood games with her sister. Cast members acted out the games. Another scene involved an audience member named Shanta, who described meeting her boyfriend in a nightclub where they both were singers. Yet another scene used a life experience from Maria Coaker to create a skit imagining her confronting a politician she did not like.



“I think it’s fabulous. It was fun being a participant and they were very creative in making all the skits and doing everything instantaneously,” she said afterward. “It is what New York is all about, being spontaneous. It’s being

able to see different faces and different people.” The show features seven members of the Castillo Theater’s performing ensemble and was conceived by artistic director Fred Newman. It is being shown weekly at the All Stars Project’s Performing Arts Center. The 23-year-old nonprofit All Stars Project sponsors the Castillo Theater’s experimental and political theater projects and survives largely on donations. Tickets are \$15.



PHOTOS: RON GLASSMAN