

The Hour

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New Live Sketch Comedy Troupe Forming in County

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By KATE MARCAL

Hour Staff Writer

When Khristee Rich lost her job last August, she was unsure of what to do next.

“Unfortunately, they had to downsize because of the economy,” she said of the contemporary art museum where she had worked. “But I was very unfulfilled there because it was an administrative job and I wasn’t allowed to be creative.”

Rich, who holds a degree in theater performance from the University of Michigan, decided to head in a new direction by creating a brand-new sketch comedy group called The Dancing Curtain.

“I’ve been dabbling in the idea since August, but I really took off with it in the spring,” she said.

Rich will be holding auditions for The Dancing Curtain at the Peaceable Barn Studio in Redding on June 27 from noon to 5 p.m.

“I’m looking for strong actors with good comedic sensibilities,” she said. “They should be able to dance, act, sing, and make wild facial expressions.”

In the casting process, Rich considers variety to be as important as talent.

“I’m looking for all ethnicities, all ages, all sizes, and all shapes,” she said. “I want a very diverse cast that’s committed to staying with me.”

After the full cast is assembled, the group will perform at different venues throughout Connecticut and New York. Eventually, Rich hopes the group will tour internationally. The hour-long show will be comprised of several 10- to 15-minute skits written entirely by Rich.

“The skits are about everyday people, conversations, and events,” she said. “They’re all based on real life, and then exaggerated a bit to bump up the humor.”

Rich counts television shows such as “I Love Lucy” and “The Carol Burnett Show” among her most significant comedic influences.

“Those shows have really inspired me,” said Rich. “Lucille Ball is one of my idols; I think she’s hysterical. I really like ‘In Living Color’ as well because they incorporated dance into their shows,” she said.

While looking to comedians like Ball and Burnett for motivation, Rich said she believes her own live show will ultimately distinguish itself from others.

“It’s not your normal sketch comedy show like ‘Saturday Night Live,’” she said. “My show is very theatrical.”

According to Rich, The Dancing Curtain is also unusual because its brand of comedy stays appropriate for the whole family.

“Some comedy shows can be vulgar, gross or offensive,” she said. “Mine is just very wholesome and uplifting.”

Another unique characteristic of Rich’s project is outlined by the title; instead of having a traditional curtain call, each performance will conclude with the entire cast dancing on stage. “Our gimmick is a dancing curtain call,” said Rich. “That’s what will make people remember us.”

As someone with firsthand experience of the recent economic crisis, Rich believes comedy is now more important than ever.

“At the end of every show, we’re just going to dance, have a great time and be very silly,” she said. “Hopefully, the audience will want to start dancing too.”

Anyone interested in auditioning for the group should contact Rich at Khristee@TheDancingCurtain.com.