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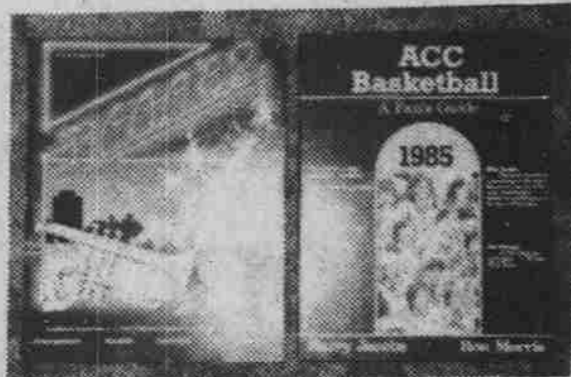
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**Cast 'Noises Off' with farce, talent**

By MARK DAVIS Staff Writer

What's harder to perform on stage than a farce? Well, how about a farce within a farce?

*Noises Off*, a farce in the truest sense of the word, rolls into Chapel Hill on Saturday at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall in a performance sponsored by the Carolina Union. UNC will get a chance to judge for itself whether the show is worthy of the acclaim it has received from audiences and critics across the country.

During its run on Broadway, critics described *Noises Off* as "more fun than we can deserve or handle" and "a devilishly funny... comic machine." Audiences leaving the theater were said to be "limp and disheveled, gasping for breath and wiping their eyes."

And so, after wowing the audiences in New York and London, a touring troupe starring Noel Harrison is on a 32-week, 77-city U.S. tour. The schedule is hectic, to say the least, but cast member Lydia Laurans doesn't seem to mind. In fact, she's having the time of her life.

"The show is hilarious," Laurans says. "We've done it 116 times, and I still laugh at the jokes. It's a riot - no moral, no deep message. It's for people who don't want to think, just laugh until tears run down their face."

*Noises Off* is a chaotic, perpetually insane show that seems rooted in the antic lunacy of the Marx Brothers. It's about a group of fifth-rate English actors seen as they rehearse and perform a horrible sex farce called *Nothing On*. Act I is a dress rehearsal of *Nothing On*, Act II is an actual performance of the play as seen through the eyes of the cast backstage and Act III is the play near the end of its run when madness abounds and anarchy reins supreme.

Through the course of the performances, the affairs and back-biting between

the actors are gloriously displayed. The cast becomes so caught up in their own tangled personal lives that they all begin to hate each other. As the performance of *Nothing On* goes on, the "actors" backstage put on a crazed pantomime sequence in which props ranging from axes to cactus plants are thrown around with reckless abandon, and all vestige of sanity is lost.

The star of *Noises*, Noel Harrison, is an accomplished actor with a string of credits in both England and America. Starring in shows such as *Camelot*, *Blythe Spirit*, *Joe Egg* and *Where's Charley?*, Harrison continues the family acting tradition begun by his father, Rex, and carried on by his daughter Cathryn.

A multi-talented individual, Harrison sang the Academy Award-winning song "The Windmills of Your Mind" in the 1968 movie *The Thomas Crown Affair*. He also has dabbled in directing, composing, farming and skiing.

Cast member Laurans, too, is multi-talented. She began ballet at age three, modeling at four, theater at five, piano at seven and violin at eight. After graduating with a degree in piano and classical music from the Peabody Institute, she toured with a number of plays, including *Fiddler On the Roof* and *The Sunshine Boys*, finding time in between to get a bachelor's degree in biology at Towson State University, paying for her education by writing for a newspaper. She received her law degree from the University of Maryland. In her spare time, she became Miss Maryland and competed in the Miss America Pageant.

Laurans, along with her fellow cast members, faces the difficult task of playing a character within a character in *Noises*. Her role as a beautiful but dim-witted sexpot is the type of role she often finds herself playing. Since becoming an actress, she has been repeatedly cast as a prostitute, waitress, or cheerleader - the old "dumb blonde syndrome." That would bother some actresses, but Laurans says she has become accustomed to it.

"It's just a character that I'm good at playing," she explains. "If you have something like that, producers know where to put you. So it's good that they put you in a mold."

Whatever the merits of such a mold, Lydia Laurans isn't worrying too much about her professional future. She's having too much fun playing a character "with the I.Q. of a person's body temperature," as she puts it, in *Noises Off*. "It's wonderful to transport people out of their problems," she says. "Once you get bitten by the acting bug, it's hard to get it out."

*Noises Off* will be performed Saturday at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Call 962-1449 for ticket information.



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