

# COMEDY TRAINING GROUND

Second City brings next generation of comic stars

When it comes to outrageous comedy, Second City is second to none.

A virtual comic-churning machine, the famed Chicago improvisation company has produced the likes of Mike Myers, Steve Carell, Tina Fey, Bill Murray, John and Jim Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner and Steve Martin.

Irreverent and uproariously funny, Second City has been keeping audiences in stitches for 50 years with its legendary antics, poking fun at anything and everything from corporate America to the blowhards of the Beltway.

The latest class of up-and-coming comics will bring their critically acclaimed – if not slightly twisted – national touring show to the Arts Center for two performances, Aug. 10-11.

“Fair and Unbalanced” will feature some of the best scenes, songs and improvisations from the company’s vast archives, as well as topical humor based on today’s political and social issues. Brash, edgy and often off-the-cuff, it’s intellectual, adult comedy not for the faint of funny bone.

The comedy scenes usually run five to 10 minutes with a few quickies thrown in for fun.

“We call the really short scenes ‘black outs’ because the lights will go out, and then it’s on to the next sketch,” Cecily Strong one of the actors

in the show explained. “We like to vary the pace to keep the audience on its toes.”

Equipped with nothing but a bag full of props and their unwaning wit, the wild and crazy actors will perform scripted sketches similar to those seen on *Saturday Night Live*. During the show, the actors will run through a couple dozen skits and songs covering a variety of topics and the stuff of everyday life.

“We add new sketches all the time to keep it fresh,” Strong said. “If someone makes a joke in the van one day, it could be in the show the next night.”

Second City’s unmitigated and long-standing success can be attributed to the company’s constantly changing material. Its lampooning-happy humor is often ripped from the headlines, sometimes within the week.

“We don’t go too far, but we do push it,” added Strong, who said the show is rated PG-13. “Anybody can be a target. It’s OK to get a few groans – it’s the nature of comedy.”

Founded in 1959, Second City opened its doors as a small cabaret theater in Chicago. It soon established itself as the training ground

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for some of Hollywood's biggest superstars including Alan Alda, Alan Arkin, Ed Asner, Jerry Stiller, Anne Meara, Peter Boyle and Robert Klein. The New York Times dubbed the company "a comedy empire." Today, it remains the comedic gold mine for *Saturday Night Live*.

Fast-paced and laugh-out-loud funny, a Second City show is like vaudeville on steroids. With little more than chairs and sound effects,

the comics will turn the Elizabeth Wallace stage into whatever world they wish, taking the audience along on their wild ride.

"Every show is different," Strong said. "When you come to one of our shows, you're seeing it for the first and only time."

Tickets for Second City are on sale now. Visit [www.tickets.artshhi.com](http://www.tickets.artshhi.com) or call 843-842-ARTS to make your reservation.