

NATIONAL LAMPOONERS

Capitol Steps pokes fun at Left and Right with bipartisan spirit

The politics-peddling Capitol Steps, renowned for its irreverent bipartisan parodies, will bring its latest skits, songs and spoofs to the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina this fall.

Stars of National Public Radio, the congressional staffers-turned comedy troupe will perform selections from their latest CD, *Desperate Housemembers*, and their special holiday release, *Barackin' Around the Christmas Tree*.

The troupe will perform three times at the Arts Center: 4 and 8 p.m. on Nov. 4 and 8 p.m. on Nov. 5. As a special treat for Hilton Head Island audiences, the group may even squeeze in the popular "Don't Cry for Me Argentina," its comic ode to former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, who confessed to meeting up with his paramour in Buenos Aires after telling his staff he was hiking on the Appalachian Trail. (Who knew the Appalachian Trail started in the Andes?)

"That was one of those stories that was so big and so funny, it screamed to be done," said Elaina Newport, Capitol Steps' producer, writer and cast member. "We had it in the show a day or two after it made the headlines."

Deftly crossing both sides of the political aisle, the lampooning-happy humorists

have put the "mock" in Democracy. Recent hits include "Return to Spenders," a hysterical jab at the Democrats' plan to tackle the deficit, and the Tea Party-inspired "Fun Fun Fun 'til Obama Takes Our Tea Bags Away."

"We've got members of the cast who are very liberal and some who are very conservative," said Newport, who bills herself as an extreme moderate. "We don't see the politics. We're just thinking of what's funny and what rhymes."

And no one is spared. They have exaggerated the makeup worn by Michele Bachmann and the Botox used by Nancy Pelosi. "Our impressions of people are cartoonish," Newport explained. "They're way over the top."

Now in its 30th year, Capitol Steps began almost by accident at an office Christmas party for now-deceased Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.). As part of the evening's entertainment, Newport and some fellow aides poked fun at their boss and his colleagues in song. Word spread, and the group was soon in demand all over D.C.

In the years that followed, the troupe expanded to include real actors having recruited virtually all the musical talent from the Hill. About half the 25 current cast members are former

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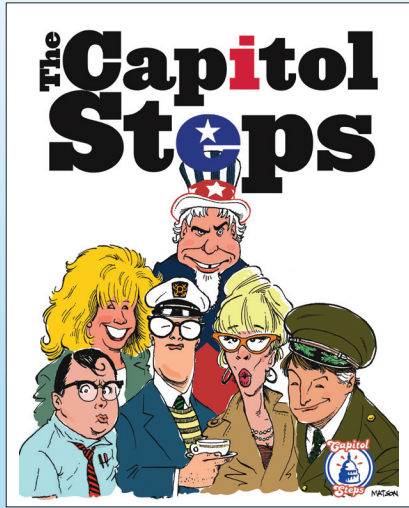


legislative staffers, representing a total of 18 congressional offices and 62 years of House and Senate experience.

With the presidential election looming, the troupe has no shortage of fodder for its politically charged sketches and songs. But the target-rich campaign also has made Capitol Steps' job more difficult as the ever-changing political landscape requires the comedy team to constantly update their material.

"We had just figured out how to get Tim Pawlenty in a song, when he dropped out," Newport

lamented. "You know, Pawlenty's not an easy name to rhyme."



In celebration of its 30th anniversary, the group has put together a closing number that recaps the best material from the last three decades in just three minutes.

"Props will be flying on that one," Newport said. "There'll be more costume changes than a Cher concert."

Tickets are \$54 and can be ordered by visiting www.artshhi.com or calling 843-842-ARTS.