



Jon Jahrmarkt (lying), Mark Jordan (center) and Shane Shannon of Valley comedy troupe Galapagos do their thing during a performance in New York City.

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Improv more than laughs

By Randy Cordova
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Last year, the Phoenix Improv Festival attracted 1,200 people, about triple the number of the previous year.

With all those first-timers showing up at the event, executive producer Bill Binder heard a recurring comment from newbies.

"People kind of assumed improv is all what you see on the Drew Carey show," Binder says, referring to *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* "A lot of people have no idea it's not about impressing the audience with how funny we are. We are actors doing a show — sometimes funny, sometimes dramatic, sometimes musical."

All shades of improv will get a workout at the four-day festival. Nineteen troupes will be featured, including performers from New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Binder says a high point will be an appearance by ColdTowne, a New Orleans troupe displaced following the hurricanes. Also ap-

The Phoenix Improv Festival

When/where: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Paper Heart Gallery, 750 N.W. Grand Ave., Phoenix. Also 6 p.m. Thursday and 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 5 p.m. Sunday at the Viad Corporate Center, 1850 N. Central Ave., Phoenix.

Admission: \$6-\$15, available at (602) 275-2721 or phoeniximprov.com.

pearing will be Eenie Meenie Miney Moe, an English-speaking troupe from Mexico.

Binder, a member of Valley troupes Galapagos and Apollo 12, also recommends the Los Angeles group COG, which takes ideas from the audience and uses them to create a film on the spot.

"There's so much more to improv than the general public knows," Binder says. "This should appeal to anyone who likes comedy or likes alternative theater. There's so many layers to it."



The comedy troupe ColdTowne comprises (from left) Chris Trew, Tami Nelson, Arthur Simone, Mike Jastroch and Daniel Rubin.



Members of Galapagos are (from left) Bill Binder, Jose Gonzales, Amy Carpenter, Mark Jordan, Shane Shannon and Jon Jarmarkt.