



## **Pick of the Week: Do the Harold**

by Nirmala Nataraj, *SF Weekly*, March 15, 2006

Improv acting has often taken a back seat to more traditional forms of performance, but the difficulty of making shit up off the cuff can't just be relegated to the pithy ad-libbing on *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* Games like *The Harold*, lauded as the "granddaddy of all long-form improv formats," show that the technique is about more than engendering a few laughs; it's about continuously unraveling a deeper meaning from any given situation. Created by improv legend Del Close, *The Harold* consists of a group opening game in which actors and audience members decide on a single word that serves as a theme for the entire activity, three scenes culled from the chosen word, another group game, and a repetition of said three scenes (usually with a few twists). The idea is to build underlying themes from what are essentially unrelated ideas. Intertwining monologues and reincarnated characters who crop up later are just some of the elements that enable *The Harold* to reveal the full glory of improv.

Hear Bay Area director Jim Cranna (who was "there, man") wax nostalgic about *The Harold's* creation before leading a troupe of BATS Improv actors through the whole thing. Bayfront Theater, Fort Mason, Bldg. B, San Francisco.