

The Nebraskan

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Weather: Mostly cloudy and cooler today with a 40 percent chance of morning showers. Expect a high of 81 (27C). Variable cloudiness tonight with only a slight chance of precipitation and a low of 70 (21C). Partly cloudy for the weekend. Expect highs in the middle to upper 80s (30C) and lows in the upper 60s to lower 70s (21C).

Barb Branda/The Nebraskan

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Macabra!

Horror theater hostess leaving coffin for college

By Mike Grant
Staff Reporter

Macabra, the hostess of WOWT-TV's "Theatre of the Macabre" sat in the studio on a Victorian love seat near a prop coffin, fitted in an eerily stunning Fredericks of Hollywood leopard skin body suit.

Macabra (who asked that we not use her real name) was in the process of shooting that afternoon. Not shooting anyone in particular, as she might pun on her popular Saturday night horror show, but rather getting ready to film the program.

"Actually, I think they wanted somebody who really looked embalmed."

— Macabra

Since it takes more than an hour to apply her makeup and transform her from a regular living mortal into the living dead character she plays, it is more economical to film two shows during one shooting, she said.

If you're wondering why you've never seen Macabra in the movies she announces it's because her acting experience is limited.

"This is going to make a lot of professional actors mad, but the only acting experience I had before this was in high school plays," she said, "I applied for this job on a lark. WOWT was holding auditions for the show, and my friends convinced me I was bizarre enough to do it."

Applicants were asked to do some impromptu acting. The list was then narrowed down to six finalists. Why was Macabra chosen?

"Elegance, dignity and poise," she said, and laughed, "Actually, I think they wanted somebody who really looked embalmed. I saw a sped-up videotape of the auditioners and all the others were moving around so much. I was stiff to keep from trembling throughout the tape. They must have liked that, so I was hired."

Macabra, an Omaha native, has a low opinion of the movies she introduces. "Most of the movies stink," she said, "But the worse the movie, the easier it is to have something to say about them between the commercials. The truly scary movies tend to leave you numb with nothing to say."

She said her favorite movies are "the Boris Karloff 1930s type, because they have much more of a presence to them."

In real life, Macabra has mixed feelings about her stardom.

"Much of the fan mail I get is from 7 to 12-year-olds who send me their drawings of monsters, but some of the mail I get from adults is really scary and weird," she said, explaining why she'd rather not give her real name.

On the streets of Omaha she said she's "found that adults stand about a block away and stare, while the bolder teenagers will come up to me for autographs."

Still, she said she's rarely recognized when she's not in costume. "When



Mark Davis/The Nebraskan

I go out to the Westroads Shopping Mall to pick up my costumes, I have to have my makeup on so I can get the right color of clothing. That's when I'm recognized," she said. "But usually, I

can flaunt and subjugate my image. It allows me to compartmentalize my life. It's like playing dress-up. In fact, my favorite time of the year is Halloween when everyone else is in costume, too."

Macabra, who said she is "37 going on 400," plans to leave "Theatre of the Macabre" by September, after hosting the program for almost three years. She is going back to school to complete her

M.B.A. degree, and hopes to someday have a management position.

"Think weird," Macabra said, before having her 2½ inch fingernails taped on.