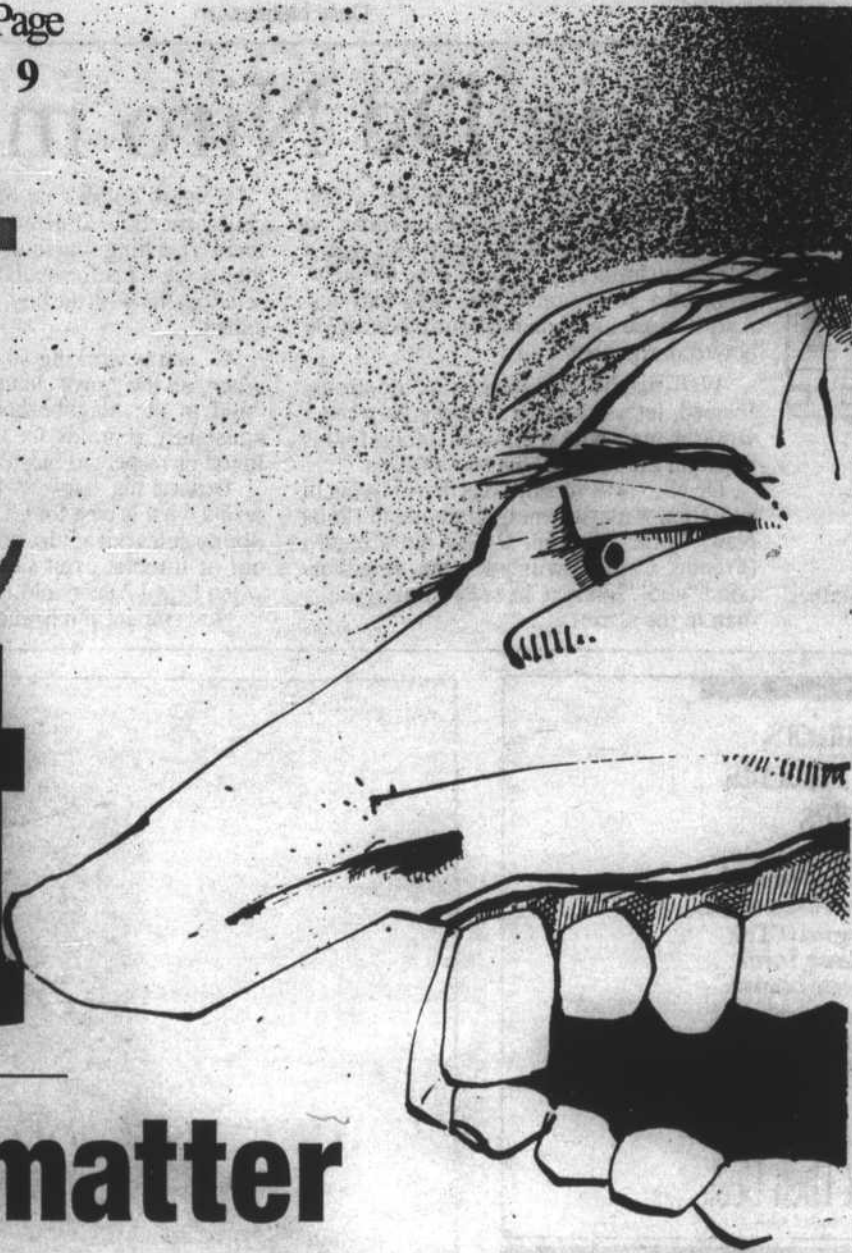


Out & A&E WEEKEND OUTLOOK about



No laughing matter

Comedian bridges cultures in 'cynical' society

By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

On a nation stuck in an economic depression, faced with rising taxes, student loans, health care and cholesterol, comedy can be an invaluable cure.

Stand-up comedy shows, like those featured on HBO, MTV and VH-1 are becoming increasingly popular. Touring comedians are coming into the spotlight.

One such comedian, Margaret Cho, on a nationwide tour, will be bringing her act to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln this weekend.

Cho said the rise of stand-up comedy was the result of society.

"Stand-up is irreverent," she said. "And, as a society, we've gotten very cynical."

"It takes a lot for us to laugh. Stand-up is an attempt at mainlining humor. We also need something with a harder edge."

Cho, a native of San Francisco, was born into a traditional Korean

family. She said it was an emotional battle trying to live in two worlds because she felt as if she did not belong in either.

Cho said she used her comedy to help Asian Americans and other minorities to identify with themselves.

"These feelings are universal," she said. "I hope the audience walks away with a feeling that they are not alone."

Although her heritage is not a hindrance to her career, she said it was an obstacle in her daily life.

"There were these two little boys in this mall in Ohio," she said, "and as they were walking behind me, I could hear them making these Chinese kung fu noises."

"I followed them out of the store all the way to the parking lot until they turned around and asked me why I was following them."

Cho said she talked to the two boys' mother, saying she should explain racism to her children.

"I told her I understand the children didn't know," Cho said. "But I told her it wasn't right either."

Cho said it was not an isolated incident.

"I am alarmed at the frequency of these occurrences," she said.

Incidents like these, Cho said, become part of her stand-up routine. Cho said she also had plans for writing a sitcom expressing some of those same feelings about racism and discrimination.

Aside from being an Asian American, Cho said she was different because she did not focus on the typical women issues.

She said she often traveled to universities because she related well to college audiences. Cho said audience response was a vital part of her act.

"I write things that will get a reaction," she said. "I'm really observant, and I pay a lot of attention to detail. One thing I observe very closely is details about generations."

"My act is not a series of jokes, either," Cho said. "I tell stories about my observations from daily life."

Although her act has been a success, Cho said she looked at it as "only a job."

"I'm a very serious person," she said. "I never was the class clown."

Cho will perform in the Nebraska Union Ballroom on Friday at 7 p.m. Admission is free for UNL students and \$3 for the public.

TOM MAINELLI

Martial arts magnates to descend on Lincoln

The true nature of martial arts is not violence.

That is the message Timothy Snyder said he hoped to get across this Saturday at the Third Annual National Martial Arts Exhibition in Lincoln.

Snyder, owner of Lincoln's Okinawan Karate and Weapons School, said the event would bring a variety of martial art disciplines together in an effort to educate and entertain the public.

"We hope to provide a night of good family entertainment," Snyder said.



Famous martial arts instructors from around the nation, as well as local instructors and students, will be given

the opportunity to display their abilities in a non-competitive forum, Snyder said.

"The event allows each discipline the chance to be recognized for their abilities," he said.

"Most of the time when groups get together it's for competition, but this is for demonstrations."

And it shows the public that martial arts are an art form — not just a method of beating people up, as the movies sometimes lead people to believe.

"It seems when you watch the popular martial arts movies, the entire theme is violence," Snyder said.

While the movies generate interest in the martial arts, they usually misrepresent them, and in the end they do more harm than good, he said.

"Martial arts are not about a bunch of kids who just want to learn how to knock people around," he said.

While people do study martial arts for self-defense purposes, there are other reasons to study as well, Snyder said.

"There are many benefits," he said. "It develops mental and physical health, it promotes a disciplined lifestyle, and it helps relieve stress."

In Japan, a student who has achieved a black belt often includes it on his or her resume, Snyder said. Employers know that a person with a black belt is highly motivated and confident.

"A person with a black belt always carries themselves well," he said.

The exhibitions on Saturday night will be the culmination of several related events this weekend, Snyder said.

Saturday afternoon a number of clinics will be offered at the Prairie Life Center, 1305 S. 70th St., by the different instructors. Everything from tai chi to judo to aikido will be discussed, he said. Clinics also will be offered on Sunday.

People interested in a list of the different clinics should call 474-1729 for further information, Snyder said.

Saturday's exhibition will be held at the Lincoln High School Auditorium. Doors open at 6 p.m. General admission is \$5 for adults and \$4 for children. A portion of the ticket fees will be donated to Lincoln's MAD Dads chapter.

Mainelli is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment editor.

