

STAGE

The Groundlings Come In From the Cold

By JANICE ARKATOV

The Groundlings are back in a new revue, opening this weekend in "The Groundlings Spectacle on Ice," under the direction of Nancy Bacon at the Groundling Theatre.

"The fun starts in the lobby," said Bacon, a recent Chicago transplant. "We'll have a TV monitor showing clips of skiing/skating bloopers and blunders."

Inside, the roster includes a structured improv on "The People's Court" ("We get a petty

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disagreement from the audience and reenact it; we've got our judge, our plaintiff, our Doug Llewelyn") and "Deanahue," a combination of Oprah, Geraldo and Donahue, played by Deana Oliver. "Deanahue's" subject: cryogenics.

Also on the agenda: a visit with Mrs. Oliver North; a segment on prophylactics; "Password" ("Sisters who know each other so well that they can say obscure clues and the other one gets it. Like if the word's *flamingo*, one says, 'Asphalt,' and the other says, 'Flamingo!'); and "Geriatrics," about two roommates—one young, one old, the latter who spends the night with the pizza delivery man. "It's about how we never lose that



Nancy Bacon is directing the Groundlings' new revue, "The Groundlings Spectacle on Ice."

desire to be hugged and cuddled, and have a warm body next to ours," Bacon said.

An addendum: The Groundlings' Sunday Company gets into the Halloween spirit tonight with an audience costume contest. Attendees are encouraged to come as "their favorite monster, goblin or famous Groundling character."

■ Theatre Carnivale gives a new spin to a classic in "Peter Pandemonium," opening Friday—for two nights only—at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions.

"We've always been into vaudevillian, wild things," said co-founder-writer Stephen Holmes. "And we use huge props: very bright, loud—and messy. In the past, we've done shows like 'The History of Pasteurization.' But 'Peter Pandemonium' is the biggest one we've ever done. Basically it's rewriting 'Peter Pan' as a Victorian perversion. [An example: Tinkerbelle walks around covered in flour.] We're dealing with things people know well—or think they know—and twisting that around. Children's stories are great for that."

■ **CRITICAL CROSS FIRE:** Will Holt's musical adaptation of Nelson Algren's novel "A Walk on the Wild Side" is playing at the Back Alley Theatre. Allan Miller and Patricia Birch co-direct.

Said The Times' Sylvie Drake: "The future of this 'Walk' depends on Holt's willingness or ability to take his fidelity to Algren's novel one step further and turn what is now mild and playful into something mordant and, as the title promises, wild."

From Dick Lochte in Los Angeles magazine: "'Walk' is obviously more ambitious than the usual 99-seat theater fare. The good news is that its ambitions are largely met. Holt has crafted a number of catchy songs, most of them bluesy or barrelhouse, and

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one or two moving ballads."

Drama-Logue's Polly Warfield cheered: "The game and gritty flavor of 1930 Depression-era Americana imbues the adventures of the kid Dove, beautifully played by Jeb Brown. Dove is Candide, or maybe Li'l Abner, rooted in his own time and place, the American South of the early 20th Century."

In the Hollywood Reporter, Ed Kaufman found "some flaws, especially in Act II, when the emotional side of things seems to come unraveled. Still, the Brechtian production is creative, daring and full of onstage energy, thanks to the imaginative [choreography] and direction of Birch and Miller."

Noted Amy Gray in Daily Vari-

ety: "With few exceptions, the hunger, ruthlessness and carnality often look carefully rehearsed, rather than genuine. There is too little Depression grit under the actors' fingernails; at this point, it's only makeup to simulate dirt."

Said Alison Sloane in the Reader: "An innocuous score and surface-level characterizations weaken Algren's dark, seamy tale. . . . Characters lose their complexities for the sake of a simplified story, and Dove's redemption becomes another predictable plot point."

From the Daily News' Tom Jacobs: "It's an uneven work, at times compelling, at other times flat and superficial. Holt calls it a work in process, and as such it has a lot of potential. There are many fine dramatic moments and strong songs. Now [it] has to be strengthened, lengthened and deepened." □