

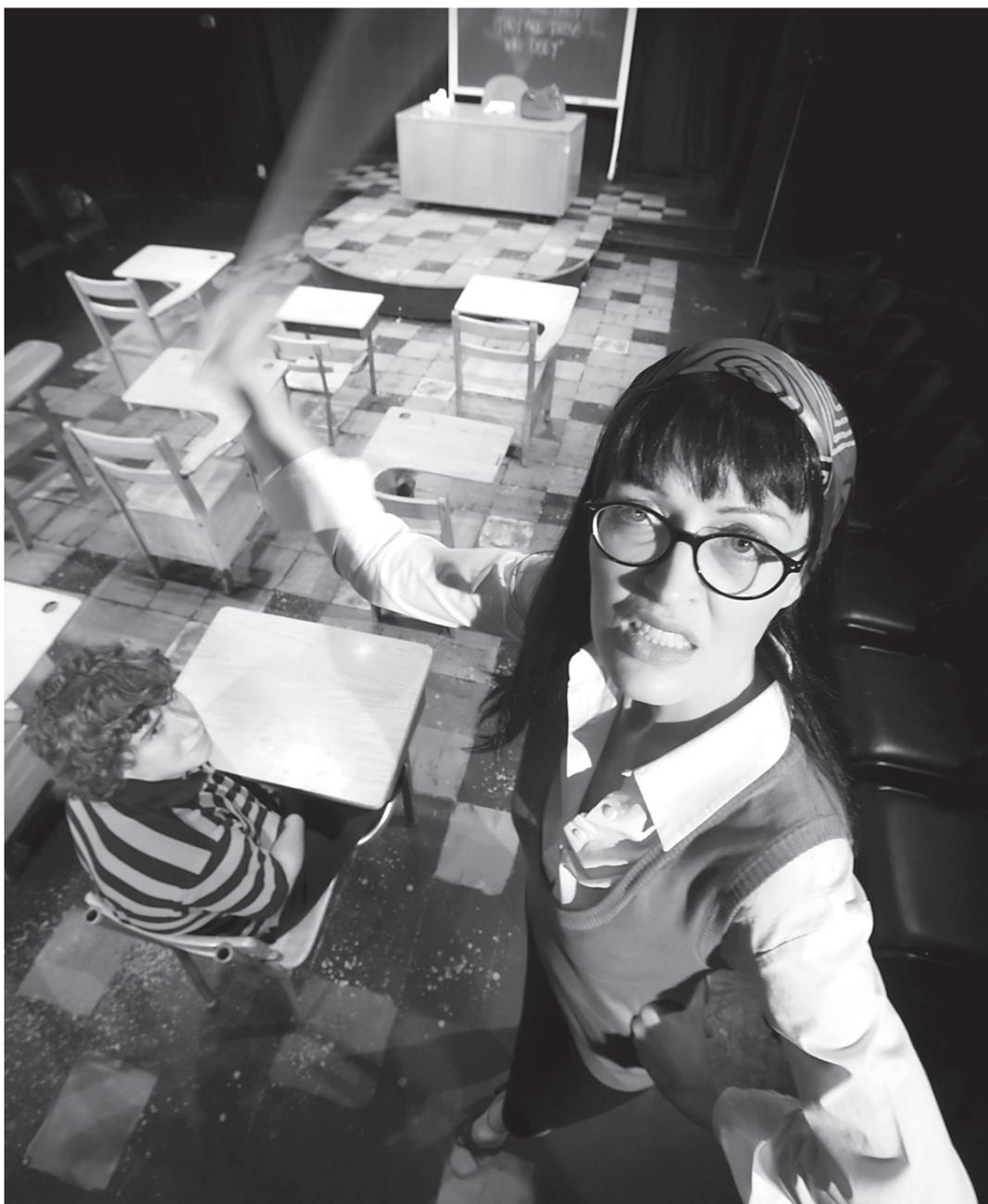
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Wasting away in class

Northern Light Theatre kicks off season with *Miss Margarida's Way*

Miss Margarida's Way

Directed by Trevor Schmidt
Starring Linda Grass
15 September to 1 October
The Third Space

MIKE SMITH
Arts & Entertainment Writer

"She had this thing with birthdays," Taylor Chadwick of Northern Light Theatre says. "The kids whose birthday it was would get to sit up at the desk and get a little present. I failed my French test in the morning and when it was my time to go up ... she totally forgot by the end of the day, and just gave me a pencil."

According to Chadwick, we've all had teachers that confused, annoyed or frustrated us to no end, but we've also had some that inspired us to take the most absurd paths in life. Chadwick, who plays a student in Northern Light Theatre's season opener, *Miss Margarida's Way*, says that the character of Miss Margarida reminds him of a teacher he had back in the day. And, like Chadwick's ability to relate, Northern Light hopes audiences, too, will find their own connection to the show.

"She is a very loopy woman ... a little uncontrolled," Chadwick says about the eighth-grade teacher, who goes from seducing to threatening her students in a heartbeat. "A teacher is one of those innocent power figures that people often don't recognize. We've tried to make [the play] as personal to our culture

as possible, because it has a lot to say about authority in general."

Throughout the course of Roberto Athayde's dark comedy, *Miss Margarida* covers the various subjects a normal youngster might learn, but often in a frenzied and bizarre manner. Trevor Schmidt, the director of the show (and the theatre's artistic director) and Linda Grass, the title actor, have taken their own direction for the play, editing it slightly to make it feel more local, in an attempt to help speak to the audience.

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Grass, a Sterling Award-nominated actress for her work in last year's *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*, has her work cut out for her. Schmidt and Grass both worked together in the Fringe's *Neo-Nancies* and have had little time to prepare.

"It was tough because we all had shows in the Fringe. That's just the life of a theatre artist, constantly doing three or four projects at the same time," Chadwick says. "She saw the script at the first rehearsal. When you are as talented as Linda is, it's easy to just jump in [and] take it by the balls."

"It's a challenge for her, but she's grappling with it quite well."

Although the play is, for the most part, a one-woman show, the cast and crew are hoping the audience plays along, since those watching will be treated like the students in the class. However, the show can still stand on its own without interaction, and they don't intend on forcing a reaction; they'll only try prodding the audience for one.

"We're not really too worried about it if they're not responsive," Chadwick says. "You can't force anyone to do anything that they don't want to."

If the audience does interact with *Miss Margarida* as hoped, though, then Grass has prepared some lines to react with, but improvisation skills will be the main tool used to keep the verbal tennis match going.

"It all depends on the audience," Chadwick says. "[Schmidt] likes to challenge people into thinking about theatre."

So, if you'd like to help further your experience, you can choose to sit at one of several desks on stage as your seat for the play rather than in the traditional seating area, but if you do, just be prepared to become part of the show yourself.



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