

Arizona Daily Star®

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They're having fun in Tempe with the Napolinator, ex-guvs

By Daniel Scarpinato

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

TEMPE — The real Janet Napolitano, having won re-election in a landslide victory last year, is sitting pretty — but just wait until you hear how unstoppable she is as a superhero.

Arizona's governor provides ample fodder for an Arizona comedy group that has made Napolitano the central character in its latest production, "The Napolinator and the Ex-Guvs for Justice!"

The show is produced by Citrus Valley Playhouse, a Phoenix-area group that puts together old fashioned radio-show-style productions. Held at the brand new Tempe Center for the Arts, this show takes some imagination.

Think of it as an Arizona version of "Prairie Home Companion" — no sets, few costumes. Just actors on stage with distinctive voices, a hilarious script and enough knowledge of state politics and history to make a mockery out of two decades worth of governors.

After being stung by a radioactive bee (no, not Senate President Tim Bee), Napolitano finds herself developing superpowers and becomes known as the "Napolinator."

And with Arizona in the middle of a massive drought, our mutated governor finds herself increasingly fond of Irish lilies. So much, in fact, that as she sits in her office vetoing bills — or "doing what she does best," says the narrator. The Napolinator says she'd be willing to wed former GOP Congressman J.D. Hayworth if he delivered flowers for her to pollinate.

Turns out California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been siphoning away our water, and the Napolinator finds herself in a duel with the "governator" for control of our resources.

So, Janet calls in some former governors. Fife Symington lends a hand with his flying pastries of pain, a jab at the former governor's enrollment in culinary school after he was forced out of office. Teamed up with Rose Mofford's battering-ram beehive hair and Evan Mecham's power of insensitive speech, this group of politicians is funny in a lethal kind of way.

The cast, under the direction of writer and host Brian Nissen, delivers jokes only Arizonans could appreciate — from Symington's belief in UFOs, to a song tribute to Arizona's record of quirky leadership in the Governor's Office.

if you go

What: "The Napolinator and the Ex-Guvs for Justice!"

Where: Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 W. Rio Salado Parkway.

When: This Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 3. 7:30 each night.

Cost: \$25.

For tickets: 1-480-350-2822 or citrusvalley.org

DID YOU KNOW ...

Some background on Arizona's roller-coaster rides with gubernatorial politics:

- Republican Evan Mecham, elected in 1986, lasted little more than a year after becoming the target of a recall campaign, an indictment charging misuse of campaign funds and an impeachment proceeding by the Legislature. The impeachment got him first, putting an end to the recall election. He was later acquitted of the criminal charge.
- Republican Fife Symington, first elected in 1991, was in the middle of his second term when he was convicted of seven counts of fraud in some development deals he made before becoming governor. He resigned in September 1997. His conviction was later reversed; he was pardoned by President Bill Clinton, preventing a retrial; and

Nissen, a history buff, says his goal is to connect Arizonans to their past. "I wanted a show where we look at our culture and politics and poke some fun at it," he says. That included aggressive outreach to the real Napolitano, hoping she might make an appearance. Her office respectfully declined.

he became a pastry chef in Phoenix.

Source: Star archives

Nissen says he absolutely wants to do a future production in Southern Arizona. The subject? That's anyone's guess, but Tucson politicians best prepare themselves for skewering before this crowd rolls into town.

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Source: Star archives

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