

HALFWAY

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"The sets are free-standing back drops with some chairs," Rasch said "The power comes from the interpretation of the set. There is only one character in a costume.

"This is a mime. He wears a white mask so he has no expression. He is symbolic of the negative side that tries to pull people down. He does not speak, but he

is always lurking around personifying the pusher."

Rasch said as a former high school English teacher, she realized the play cannot be preachy because students would not listen to the message.

"We never compromise the theater aspect or the education," Rasch said. "You cannot reach students through preaching, you have to reach them emotionally. The audience becomes enthralled because they identify with the

play. The feelings of loneliness, alienation, security, insecurity and danger — things we all have experienced. We want to help the young people understand how you can get swept away."

Rasch said the play has a universal theme that all audiences can identify with.

"The audience becomes transfixed. It doesn't matter if we are in a rural town or an urban city. If we are in California or Nebraska, we reach people's feelings. If a crowd

comes in rowdy, three minutes into the production it is so quite you could hear a pin drop. Many of the actors were surprised because it is a spiritual experience and they did not realize that they would touch that many lives. This is the effect of the theater."

Even with the strong impact of the play, Rasch said she did not expect such a huge reaction.

"The play first opened in 1989 and has been touring for nine years," Rasch said. "This is the

longest, most successful production. We have traveled to 38 states, Guam, Canada and the Virgin Islands. We have reached over 850,000 people. We have also received many awards for this production. Recently, Time Warner donated a \$100,000 ad which ran in the People's magazine's tribute to Diana."

Peter Nunez, assistant secretary in the Department of the Treasury, said in a press release the play has a dramatic effect

compared to some drug prevention programs.

"The drug prevention touches audiences in lectures and speeches," Nunez said. "The play mirrors the underlying substance abuse problem and it causes a profound impact on the audience."

"I am convinced it brings young viewers more clearly the consequences of their own destructive behavior."

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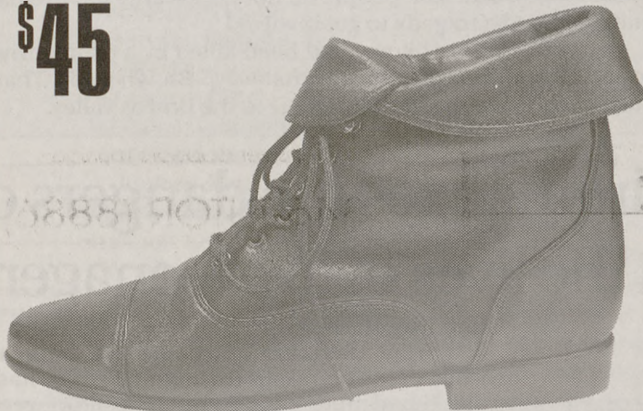
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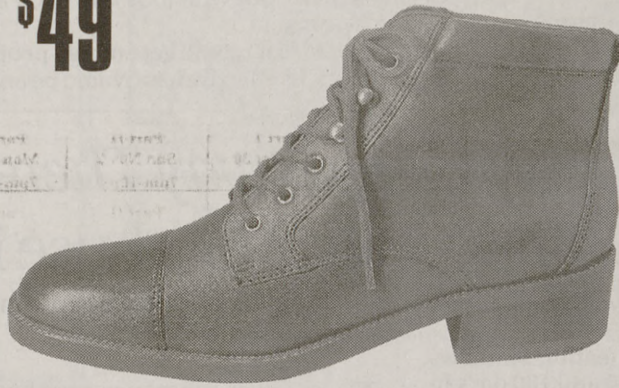
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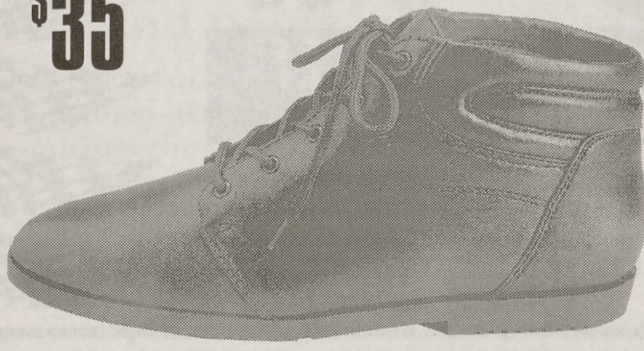
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