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Contributing Writer

With five minutes until the opening of Cal State Hayward's summer production of "As You Like It," Gillian Robins sat in her chair, a huge binder laid out on a wooden table in front of her.

Around her people flipped switches and pressed buttons. The room was dark except for the soft glow emanating from a small desk lamp, a laptop and other computer monitors. It seemed very similar to the bridge of a naval vessel, with Robins the captain.

She looked out of the windows of the control booth over a sea of people in the audience, examining the deserted stage.

"We are five to places," Robins calmly announced to her crew via her headset radio. After five minutes of shuffling and going over check lists, Cal State Hayward's resident stage manager started the show.

"Cue lights," she ordered. "Okay, let's rock and roll".

Those words began a flurry of activity in the control booth at the back of the theater. A pattern emerged during the show: a rush of pushing buttons, flipping switches and radio commands at scene changes, usually followed by a quiet calm during the middle of a scene, and then a repeat of activity.

Activity began when the stage manager issued orders over the radio and ended when she stopped talking.

Robins, a senior planning to graduate in March of 2004, has only been doing this work for about a year and a half. Her relative inexperience doesn't show.

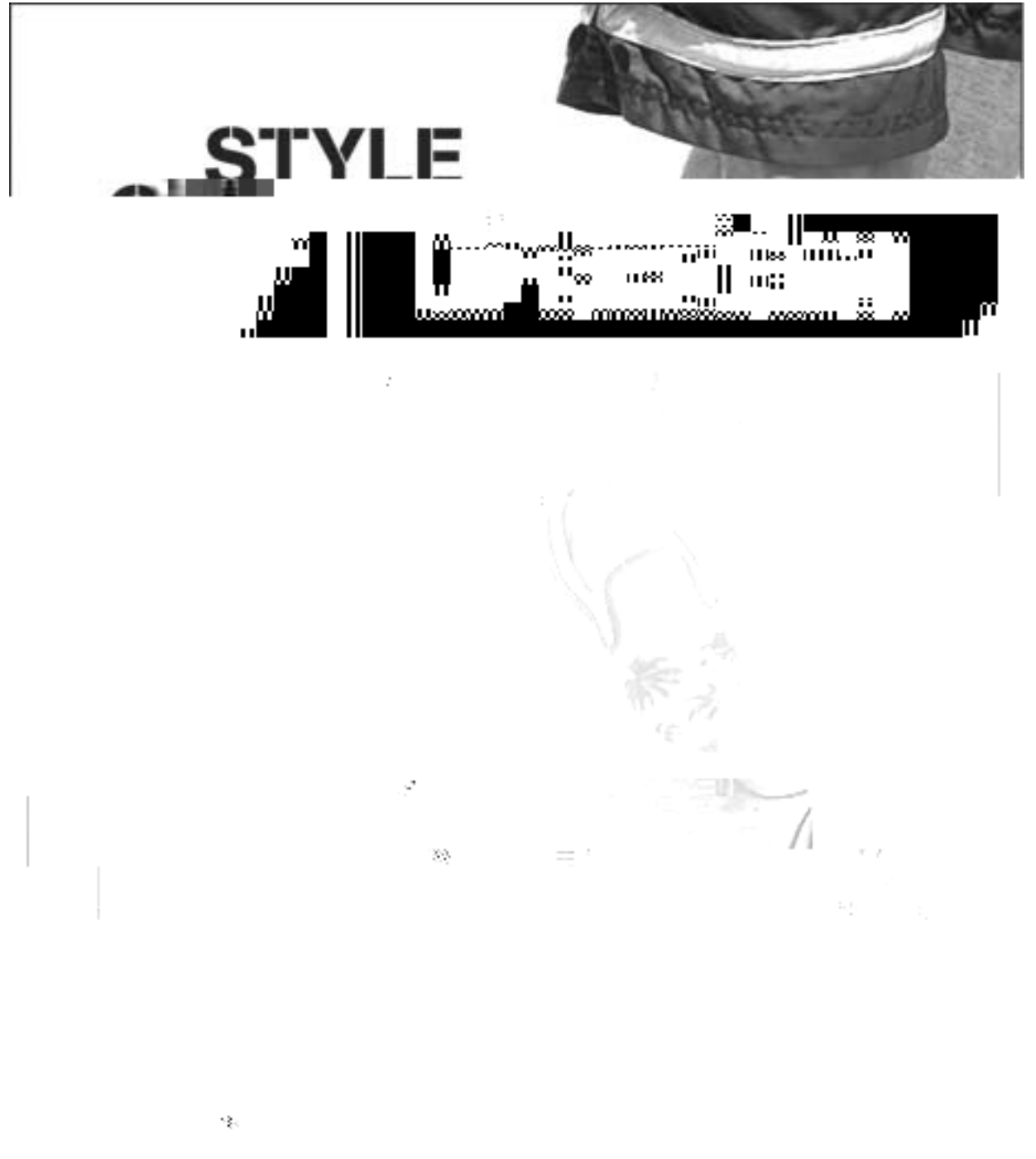
"You need to learn how to control a situation," she explained. "If you can manage something and take charge, it doesn't take long to learn. Anyone can do it; it just takes confidence".

As a stage manager for the major productions at Cal State Hayward, Robins has a laundry list of responsibilities. In the

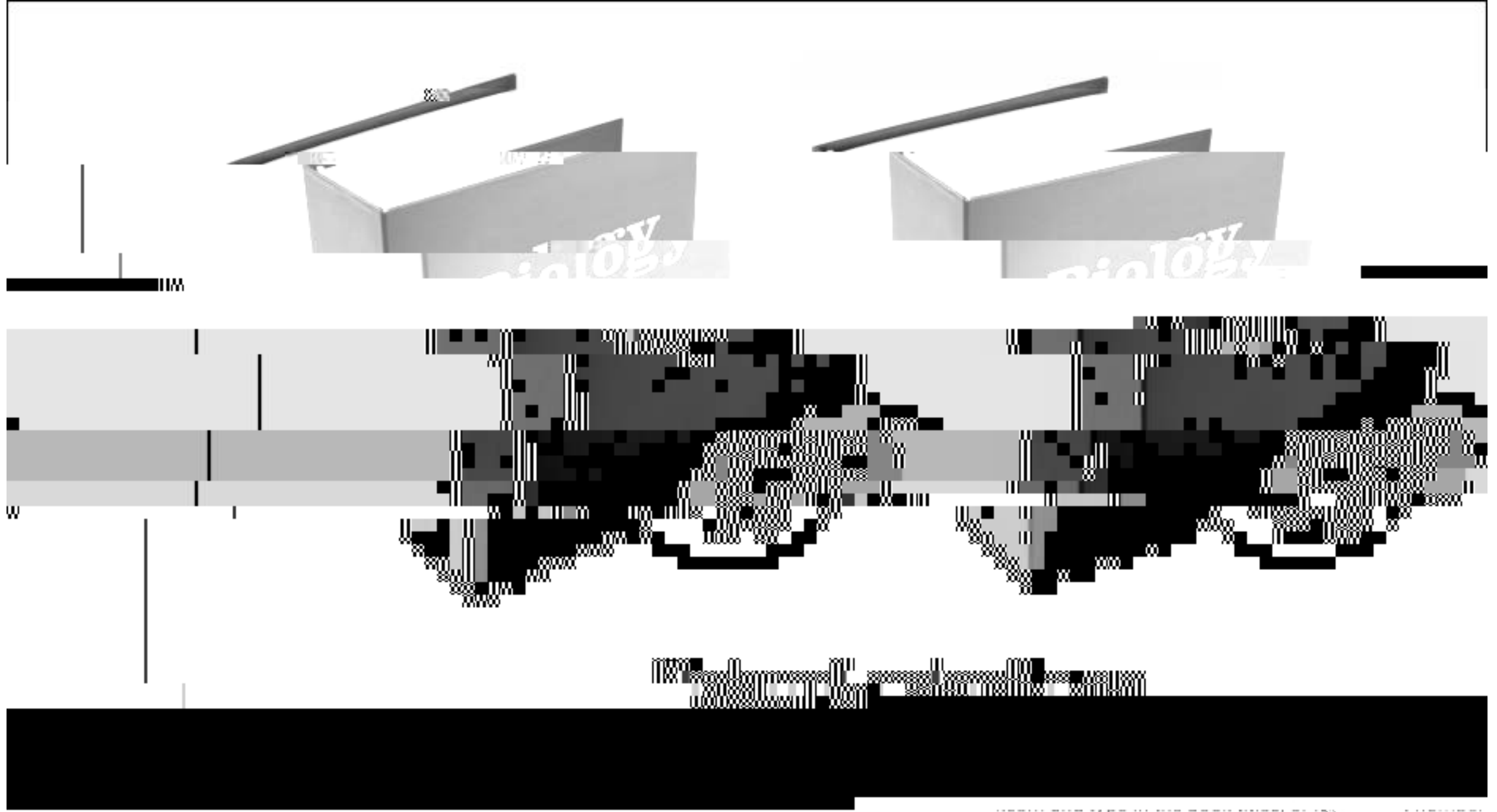
weeks leading up to a performance, a stage manager must balance interaction with the director, taking walking notes for the show, supervising the actors and making sure everyone is where he should be at the right time.

Robins is the first person to arrive at a rehearsal and the last to leave, locking up the theater after everyone else has left. These rehearsals can go on for weeks, taking three to four hours a night, four to five nights a week.

With about two shows per quarter, not to mention volunteer jobs taken on the side for fun or extra experience, stage managing can be a full-time job. It's a lot to take on for a full-time student with a part-time job on campus, an active social life and membership in the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority.



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Advertisement for Half.com. The ad features the text "half.com" in a large, bold font, followed by "by". There is also a small logo for "mu... day" on the left side.