G. K. CHESTERTON once had a good line: “Jokes are generally honest. Complete solemnity is always dishonest.” Kyla Grogan, a.k.a. Onion News Network anchor Andrea Bennett, might disagree.

With her flawless impersonation of a television news anchor — from her lip gloss and hairspray to the slightly aggressive tic that accompanies her signoff — she is proving that seriousness is the joke. As a star of the satirical Web site’s “news” videos, Grogan (COM’91) enjoys holding a mirror to the hyperdramatic television newscasts we often take at face value.

“You know the saying, if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck?” Grogan asks. “The Onion takes that and blows it apart.”

Anchoring fake news is a natural fit for Grogan, a journalism student-cum-performer-cum-journalist-cum-fake journalist. She “grew up in the arts,” she says, in Gainesville, Florida, spending summers in Hartford, Connecticut, where she was born. Unpersuaded that she could turn theater and dance into a career, Grogan studied broadcast journalism at the College of Communication. Television news “shares a common thread with performing on stage,” she says. “The live factor was kind of addicting.”

After graduation, she auditioned for a Broadway role on a visit to New York and ended up in the German production of Starlight Express, “a crazy-ass Andrew Lloyd Webber show on roller skates.”

“I had roller-skated competitively as a child,” she says. “It sounds like comedy, but it’s true.”

Several years later, Grogan put her performing career on hold to pursue journalism. She joined KLAS-TV in Las Vegas, rising to on-air breaking news reporter. But the industry wasn’t for her.

“I’m a little bit goofy, and news is very serious,” she says. “Sometimes you have to make mountains out of molehills. You have to have a story, even if there isn’t one.”

Still, covering “death and destruction” from a news helicopter and dealing with local TV anchors gave her plenty of grist for the mill when she landed the Onion job. “Andrea is an amalgam of many people I’ve observed and worked with,” she says discreetly. “She’s the greatest hits.”

Then there’s her alter ego’s résumé: according to ONN, Andrea Bennett was named the “most stalked” news personality of all time by the New York Times and once made U.S. Senator Russ Feingold cry.

“Andrea and I share many of the same qualities,” Grogan says. “She’s very serious about what she does, and she’s very certain that everything she says is extremely important.”

Grogan joined the ONN staff just after the Web site’s April 2007 debut. She was unfamiliar with the Onion, but at her audition in New York, the writers impressed her. “I inadvertently had memorized the script, because it was so funny I just kept reading it,” she says.

Since then the site has taken off, gaining both eyeballs and accolades. Last year, ONN won a Peabody Award, the prestigious prize coveted by broadcasters, without even entering.

Now, Grogan and the Onion are preparing to leap to actual broadcast. Onion News Network will begin airing on the Independent Film Channel early next year. She’s prepared to see her fan base expand from its current core of “smarty-pants people” — teenage boys who approach her on the street, a Harvard professor who stopped a lecture when he noticed her in the room — and the YouTube user responsible for the video channel “Andrea Bennett is Hot.”

“What better job could a girl ask for,” Grogan asks, “than being a counterculture news hero?”

In the meantime ONN continues to prove, as Chesterton maintained, there’s a hint of truth in every joke — or at least a convincing appearance of fact.

In January 2009, Andrea Bennett broke a story on the release of “Apple’s latest must-have gadget, the MacBook Wheel,” a visual gag meant to poke fun at Apple’s buzzworthy hardware releases. The fake laptop, its keyboard replaced by a huge version of the iPod click wheel, and spot-on mock advertising (“The Wheel. Reinvented.”) fooled many. One tech blogger even posted an early, serious review. Could the send-up have provided inspiration for the iPad, Apple’s keyboard-free device that debuted this spring?

“We’re so far out in front of the news that we know it before they do,” Grogan says with a laugh.

KATIE KOCH