TWIN CITIES LIVING

Mpls. Jewish Humor Fest taking place Jan. 12-26

The Sabes JCC has announced the fourth annual Minneapolis Jewish Humor Festival, which will take place Jan. 12-26. This two-week festival of one-person shows, standup comedy, workshops, storytelling, film and special events will celebrate the Jewish contribution to the world of humor.

Presenters and performers feature both local and national talent - including Linda Belt, Howard Lieberman, David Misch, Rabbi Sim Glaser, Joy Veh, Dana Goldberg and more.

All festival events will take place at the JCC, 4330 Cedar Lake Rd. S., St. Louis Park, and are open to the public.

The 2013 festival schedule is as follows:

- Opening Night: "Matzoh Balls and Meatballs," stand-up comedy with Linda Belt and Greg Vaccariello, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 12. Tickets include a post-show opening night party in the JCC lobby catered by CRAVE.
- · You Don't Have to Be Jewish... but It Couldn't Hurt!, written and performed by Gary Gilson, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 13 (see story below).
 - Erotic Jewish Humor: The Oxy-

moron Show, written and performed by Howard Lieberman, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16. Lieberman's passion remains grounded in storytelling and performance art that uses sex and humor to force people to confront the political issues of

• Film screening of The Yankles, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 17 and 12:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 18. The 2009 film by David R. and Zev Brooks follows Charlie Jones (Brian Wimmer), a former major league baseball player, who connects with Elliot (Michael Buster), an Orthodox Jew studying to be a rabbi who's trying to salvage the hapless baseball team (nicknamed "The Yankles") at his yeshiva.

- · Unofficial "Ladies Night," featuring comedienne Dana Goldberg with special guest Joy Veh and hosted by Sarah McPeck, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19.
- · Laughter Yoga Workshop with Esther Ouray, 12 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20. Started in India, laughter yoga is now practiced in 53 countries and anyone can do the simple exercises (stretching, breathing and laughing).
- The History of Ha! with David Misch, 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20. Misch, author of the recently published Funny: The Book (www.funnythe book.com), will give a hilarious, video-illustrated talk that traces the history of humor. The performance will be followed by a Q&A, and a reception and book signing.
- The Wicked Wit of the West! with Hank Rosenfeld, 7:30 p.m. Thursday,

Jan. 24. NPR storyteller Rosenfeld will use rare film footage and audio clips to explore the career of Irving Brecher — "the funniest writer you've never heard of" - who wrote for the Marx Brothers and classic musicals, and created TV's first situation comedy, The Life of Riley. The performance will be followed by a Q&A, as well as a book signing of The Wicked Wit of the West by Irving Brecher, as told to Hank Rosenfeld.

· Material I Can't Use in Sermons (but Do Anyway): An Evening with Rabbi Sim Glaser (a.k.a. the Inappropriate Rabbi), with special guest Laura Thorne and hosted by Sabes JCC CEO Joshua Wert, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 26. Back by popular demand after selling out 280 seats in last year's festival, Rabbi Glaser will share more of his wicked sense of humor. Tickets include a closing night reception following the show.

For tickets and information, visit: www.sabesjcc.org or call 952-381-

Telling stories, finding humor

Journalist Gary Gilson has created a show of stories and jokes to which anyone can relate

By ERIN ELLIOTT BRYAN Community News Editor

Gary Gilson has been collecting stories and jokes nearly his entire life. He grew up with a father who traveled with carnival midways and later operated bingo parlors, and with a mother whose family was filled with trailblazers on Broadway and in Hollywood.

"My parents let me stay up until one in the morning from the time I was about 13 years old listening to these stories," Gilson told the AJW. "I began to go through my material that I've been collecting for years and I said, I want to write a show that is about the people whose storytelling abilities helped shape my life as a professional and just as a person."

With the help of director Peter Moore, dramaturg Buffy Sedlachek and music director Phil Aaron, Gilson has created You Don't Have To Be Jewish... but It Couldn't Hurt!, which he will perform on Jan. 13 as part of the 2013 Minneapolis Jewish Humor Festival.

Gilson is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He began his career as a general assignment reporter at the Minneapolis Star before transitioning to work in television in New York, Los Angeles and the Twin Cities.

Locally, he was host of TPT's NightTimes Magazine and was a public affairs producer at WCCO. He has also written for MplsStPaul Magazine, the Star Tribune and the St. Paul Pioneer Press, and served as executive director of the Minnesota News Council for 14 years.

With this Humor Festival Gilson, an Emmy Award-winning journalist, says he is launching his second career - building on his celebrated ability to tell great stories.

"I want to do something that expresses myself," Gilson said. "I know that people thirst for this kind of stuff. It's nostalgic, it's funny in a very warm way."

Gilson noted that the show is not stand-up comedy, but rather a collection of anecdotes that trigger jokes with which people can identify. The stories are brought to life by more than 160 photos — some of Gilson's family and others representing Jewish history - projected on stage, and music by Aaron, a jazz pianist, and Dale Mendenhall, on saxophone

"They have about 35 different music cues in the show, maybe 40, and the themes of the music, which are recognizable songs - Gershwin tunes, this and that — they support the theme of the story I'm telling," Gilson said.

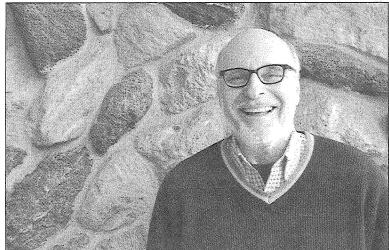
An early version of the show premiered at a synagogue in Colorado Springs, which was promoted with the help of Gilson's wife, Trish Cowley. He also performed it during three sold-out performances in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where the couple spends time during the winter.

Once he connected with Moore and Sedlachek, Gilson spent more than a year polishing the show.

"I asked Buffy, Why are you doing this? And she said to me, 'Because your storytelling has an authenticity to it that is very rare on the stage," Gilson said. "This is about attitude. How do you look at life? Are you going to go around feeling sorry for yourself all the time or are you going to make humor out of it?"

Gary Gilson will perform You Don't Have to Be Jewish... but It Couldn't Hurt! 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 13 at the Sabes JCC, 4330 Cedar Lake Rd. S., St. Louis Park. It is recommended for ages 12 and older.

Tickets are \$12 for the general public, and \$10 for JCC premium/ community members and students; visit: www.sabesjcc.org or call 952-381-3499.







Gary Gilson will perform You Don't Have to Be Jewish... but It Couldn't Hurt! on Jan. 13, as part of the 2013 Minneapolis Jewish Humor Festival.

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