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, stand-up 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 Mish, Rabbi Sim Glaser, Jov Veh, Dana Goldberg and more. All festival events will take place at the JCC, 4339 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 Vaccarello, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 12. Tickets include a post-show opening night party in the JCC lobby catered by GRAVE.
  • 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 the day.
  • 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 Winsmer), a former major league baseball player, who connects with Elliot (Michael Bursb), an Orthodox Jewish 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 Jov Veh and hosted by Sarah McPeck, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19.

• Laughter Yoga Workshop with Esther Orey, 12 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20. Started in India, laughter yoga is now practiced in 53 countries and anyone can do the simple exercises (stretches, breathing and laughing).

• The History of Ha! with David Mish, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20. Mish, author of the recently published Fanny: The Book (www.funnythebook.com), will give a hilarious, video-illustrated talk that traces the history of humor. The performance will be followed by a QA 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 humdest 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 QA, 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 Anyways): An Evening with Rabbi Sim Glaser (i.e., 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 our 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 952-381-3499.

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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 opened bingo parlors, and with a mother whose family was filled with tailors 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 AFW. “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 TPF’s NightTimes Magazine and was a public affairs producer at WCCO. He has also written for Mpls.St.Paul 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 show, 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 Jew-