

Avner the Eccentric to bring show to Orono

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

When Avner Eisenberg hits the stage at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14, at the Collins Center for the Arts in Orono, he'll be alone, but behind the scene, a special addition will be helping his show, "Exceptions to Gravity," come to life — his son.

Eisenberg, better known as Avner the Eccentric, isn't your typical clown. You won't find him with a painted on smile or huge shoes. He doesn't wear frills or polka dots. His performances are commonly called physical slapstick humor, but he's a self-described "dro-pologist."

"If I pick up three things, one of them is bound to fall," Eisenberg said.

Audiences can expect a "theater predicament," as Eisenberg described it, consisting of his character, the janitor, who enters the stage after a show is over to clean up.

"He realizes that the audience is there, but he's got a job to do, so he gets on with it," Eisenberg said.

From there, comedy ensues. Eisenberg has been on Broadway. He's performed in Paris, London and Madrid and traveled the country. But since 1984, he has called Maine home.

"It was over 30 years ago, and I was hanging out in New York waiting for my show to open on Broadway. A friend of mine's parents lived on Peaks Island, and it was a very exotic sounding place to me. I took a weekend and flew up, and two weeks later, I bought a little cottage," Eisenberg said.

Eisenberg raised his son, Zev, on Peaks Island, a place he describes as "perfect."

"It was the most amazing place to raise a kid," Eisenberg said.

Zev Eisenberg grew up watching his father perform, but when he was young, he was introduced to the behind the scenes work by a man named Jeff, who toured with Avner Eisenberg for several years.

"Jeff took him up to the light booth. After that, he didn't want to be anywhere near the stage," Eisenberg said.

Eisenberg's son is now a software engineer living in Massachusetts, and though he isn't a performer, he still juggles. He recently returned from Juggle MIT, a juggling festival at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"I never seriously considered theatre or vaudeville as a career, but I've always been interested in it," Zev Eisenberg said.

He helps out when he gets the chance and looks forward to returning to his old "stomping grounds" to run the lights and watch his father perform again.

"It's kind of amazing how consistent he is and how well he knows the audience," the younger Eisenberg said. "I know the movements so well, because I've seen it so many times, but it never gets boring."

The word clown is often synonymous with small children, but Avner Eisenberg said that his performance depends on the irony of situations, and it is therefore better appreciated by older audiences — so don't be shy, all ages are welcome at his show.

Once, years back, someone asked Eisenberg what he did if people didn't find him funny.

"When they don't laugh, thank goodness, I've got enough problems to worry about before being laughed at," Eisenberg joked. "The audience has to have the sense of humor, not you."

And if all else fails, he's learned to just roll with the punches.

"If you can't succeed every time, learn to fail magnificently," he said.



Eisenberg



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Linda Perrin puffs out her cheeks while blowing glass at her studio in Ellsworth on Tuesday.

Fluid fire

Art takes shape at studio for glass blowing in Ellsworth

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

Three furnaces blaze in Atlantic Art Glass studio, reaching temperatures that exceed 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Hot air drifts from their fiery bellies, gliding through an open window to greet the chilly February morning. The meeting of hot air and cold makes the snowy scene outside shimmer.

Linda Perrin, Ken Perrin and Derrick Sekulich move fluidly throughout the space. Ken Perrin begins at one furnace, dipping a blowpipe into a crucible of molten glass, gathering it like honey on a dipper.

Collectively, they begin the dance that is glass blowing.

The blowpipe goes from hand to hand, back and forth, from furnace to marver to bench. It's dipped in colorful pieces of glass, heated and blown. It's

spun and swung throughout the space.

"It's like ballet at a rock concert," Sekulich says, his voice raised slightly to overpower the roar of the furnaces.

The fiery molten gathering starts shapelessly, a pliable mass of glowing glass flowing around the end of the blowpipe, but after visits to the furnace, the marver — a thick flat sheet of steel — and the bench where Linda Perrin sits, it begins to take on new life.

"This is something we kind of innovated," Linda says as Ken rolls the molten glass on copper leaf laid out on the marver. The copper will create a blue-green color, but for now, it blackens and melts into the ball of glass. He puts it into the furnace again, then passes it over to Linda Perrin once more.

Linda Perrin's fingertips glide over the blowpipe, delicately spinning it to shape the glass



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Vases line the wall at the Atlantic Art Glass studio.

and prevent it from dripping from the rod. After the glass hardens slightly, the blowpipe is passed back to Ken Perrin, who heats it again in another furnace. He blows into the end of the blowpipe after removing it, his cheeks inflating like a puffer fish, the glass expanding ever so slightly, then brings it back to Linda Perrin.

She uses an entire table filled with primitive-looking tools, from wet wooden paddles, giant shears, a butter knife, even a wad of wet newspaper, which helps shape the piece into a smooth oval. The newspaper siz-

zles and pops, catching fire momentarily and sending the smell of burning paper into the air.

Heat flows from the blaze orange mass, blowing Linda Perrin's hair back and turning her face pink.

Finally, nearly an hour after they began, it is taken to its final resting place in the third furnace, called an annealer, where it will slowly cool.

"Glass is very fast. It's moving quickly when it's hot. You have to finish it. You can't put it on a shelf and come back to it later, because you need it to be

See Glass, Page C2

Woman creates cancer mural to raise awareness

BY JOSEPH CYR
HOULTON PIONEER TIMES

HOULTON — Some people raise awareness for causes by going on mission trips, while others endure grueling road races.

Houlton native Susan York, an award-winning artist and author, decided the best way for her to raise awareness for a cause that affects her personally would be to put paint to paper. York, who resides in Shokan, New York, is working on a 108-piece mural using images, stories and song lyrics as a shield to cancer and other world ills.

"I was at Kripalu to see my childhood friend Maria McManus give a talk on positive psychology titled 'Why Mattering Matters,'" York said. "I was really impressed. She challenged me to do something similar around my cancer experience because she thought it was unique. That was two years ago. I struggled with

the idea of asking people to support my idea. She coached me that I was giving people an opportunity to participate in something special. It is much easier for me to give than to receive, though through cancer I have had to learn accept help."

"Gathering Goodness Mosaic" is based on submissions from supporters and seemed like the best way for York to represent all the positive feelings she received from others around the world during her own battle with cancer.

"By asking people to contribute their pictures, stories and music that represent peace, love and joy to them, it recreates the feeling that I had post-surgery of being held in a gentle hand made of love, positive thoughts and prayers," she said.

Contributors have each submitted a photograph to York for her to recreate in artform on a canvas. She decided to create an on-line fundraising campaign through the website Kickstarter. With five days remaining on the fundraiser, York has already reached her goal of collecting \$20,000 in pledges through the generosity of 154 individuals.



York



COURTESY PHOTO

Houlton native Susan York, now a resident of Shokan, New York, is working on a 108-piece mural to raise awareness for ovarian cancer.

The campaign will continue to accept donations up until 10 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14. Additional money collected will go to covering fees and the creation of a website where all of the submissions can be posted.

Her original idea for "Gathering Goodness Mosaic" was born from an experience she had three

years ago when she was diagnosed with Stage 3C ovarian cancer.

"I had wanted a child forever but hadn't found the right person to share such an experience with until I was 46," York said. "I would have said I was the strongest and healthiest I'd ever been

See Mural, Page C2

converge|connect|create

Waterville
CREATES!

To see more events visit:
watervillecreates.org
207.616.0292



Colby College Museum of Art • Maine Film Center
Waterville Public Library • Common Street Arts
Waterville Opera House • Waterville Main Street



arts

January 13 – February 27 / *Common Street Arts*
Monhegan...the Muse: Selected works from the Lupine Gallery Collection

February 8 – 28 / *Waterville Public Library*
Light, Shadow, and Soul Exhibition of Watercolors by David Solmitz;
Reception Friday, February 26, 5–7 PM

February 25, Noon / *Colby College Museum of Art*
Music in the Museum: Poetry + Lyric: 20th Century Song

film

February 25 – April 3 / *Railroad Square Cinema*
Art in the Lobby: Curious Gardens, Adrienne Beacham solo exhibition;
Opening Reception February 26, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company:
The Winter's Tale



February 21, 1 PM

Waterville Opera House

For tickets visit: www.operahouse.org