



Johnny Cash celebrated in Bangor

‘Ring of Fire’ to take stage at opera house

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

On Tuesday evening at the Bangor Opera House, performers trickled through the doors, their arms laden with instrument cases. They swept through the lobby and into the theater space, busying themselves with rehearsal preparations.

Ashley Lewis lugged her guitar case up onto the stage and started her voice exercises, trilling along and flitting about the theater happily. Andrew Crowe and Gaylen Smith began filling the stage with instruments, from banjos and guitars to mandolins and an upright bass. Ira Kramer and Jeremy Sevelovitz arrived to complete the quintet.

These five comprise the performing cast for “Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash,” a production by the Penobscot Theatre Company that will kick off its 2015-2016 season.

“[The musical is about] telling the story through the songs,” said Smith, a Brewer resident who will play one of many incarnations of Cash. Each actor, including Crowe, Kramer, Sevelovitz and Smith, plays Cash at some point during his life, and actress Lewis juggles the roles of the women in his life, including Cash’s mother and his second wife, June Carter Cash. The dialogue facilitates the exploration of Cash through his music, and there’s just enough of it to give shape to Cash’s life.

“I think that fans are going to get interesting details that they wouldn’t have normally understood without the songs latched into his life,” Lewis said of the show.

Each of the performers will fill out the story by performing almost 40 Cash songs on a range of instruments at each of the 14 performances from Sept. 10 to Sept. 27.

Crowe, who is also the show’s music director, stressed the show isn’t an impersonation of Cash but rather a celebration.

“There’s a danger in these shows of trying to impersonate,” Crowe said. “When you impersonate them it becomes a flimsy, fake replica of something that was once amazing. I think that does a disservice to the musician. We’re here to celebrate the music with the audience and try to steer things in that direction rather than doing an impersonation.”

In addition to the songs and acting of the performers, a projection screen will provide actual video and photos of Cash throughout his life. The production is a reimagining of the original Broadway performance and chronicles Cash’s journey from Arkansas to the Grand Ole Opry and everything in between. But it speaks to much more than just Cash’s life, using universal themes to relate to all manner of theatergoers, just as Cash’s music crossed genres, cultural divides and generations.

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Appleton artist Abbie Read is among a group of Maine artists whose work is hanging in the residence of Dana Smith, U.S. ambassador to Qatar.

From Appleton to Qatar

Maine artist’s ‘Library’ finds international audience

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Artist Abbie Read of Appleton didn’t know what to make of the email that appeared in her inbox in spring 2014.

“It said something like, ‘Hello, I’m with the Art in Embassies program and I’d like to talk with you about sending one of your pieces to hang in a show in Doha, Qatar,’” Read recalled during a recent conversation at her home. “I really didn’t believe it. I thought it was a hoax.”

But last October, Read found herself not only shipping five heavy panels of her massive wall-mounted sculpture, “Library,” to the U.S. embassy in Doha, but following them there in person to oversee their installation in the official residence of U.S. Ambassador Dana Smith.

The 7-foot-high, 10-foot-long section of “Library,” a colorful, deeply textured, mixed-media montage of books, found objects and other elements, will hang in the ambassador’s residence through the end of Smith’s appointment in two years. It’s just a portion of the larger piece, which is built in 2-foot sections and currently spans some 36 feet.

Read said “Library” has evolved over time, without any kind of master plan or preconceived design.

“Each element, each artistic decision grows spontaneously out of the previous step,” she said.

Objects in the piece are given new significance as they are framed, varnished, stitched in patterns, wrapped in netting, coated in wax and in other ways altered as part of the larger piece.

“I’d like the viewer to take in the title and understand my artistic conception of a library,” Read said. “It’s a resource where you’ll find a collection of stories and images, both familiar and strange; it’s the manifestation of a culture you’re acquainted with.”

Read is one of 10 artists, most with Maine roots or connections,



Appleton artist Abbie Read’s wall-mounted sculpture “Library” is a colorful, deeply textured, mixed-media montage of books, found objects and other elements.

whose work was chosen for the the current Qatar exhibit courtesy of the U.S. Department of State’s Art in Embassies program.

“It is always powerful to see how artists connect with each others’ cultures despite language barriers or different customs,” said Smith, the ambassador, in an email interview. “Qataris really responded to Abbie’s authenticity and passion for her work, traits I think really represent Maine’s personality and Ameri-

cans more broadly.”

Read is also the only artist in the show who has made the trip to the ultra-modern capital city of Doha and participated in the “artist exchange” element of the program, in which she both led local art workshops and learned more about the artists that live, work and display their art in Qatar. Accompanied by her husband, Bart, Read spent a total of five days in the progressive Arab nation.

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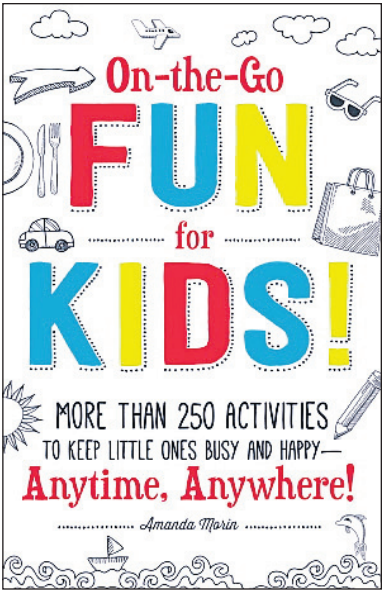
Book occupies kids on the go

BY SARAH WALKER CARON
BDN STAFF

For parents out there who’ve ever fielded questions of “Are we there yet?” and “How much longer?” a new book seeks to give them the tools to help kids stay busy while on the go.

“On-the-Go Fun for Kids!” by Amanda Morin contains ideas for more than 250 activities for kids that can keep them occupied and entertained during car rides, in the grocery store, while waiting in line and more.

“I have three kids of my own and have spent a lot of time in waiting rooms,” Morin, a former kindergarten teacher, said. “This is definitely something that was needed for those in between moments.”



Morin, formerly of Bangor, drew on her experience in the classroom and as a parent to develop the book. Many of the activities for use while waiting in lines or in waiting rooms were ones she employed with her students for “transition times,” while lining up, heading to specials such as music class. Others came from things she has done with her own kids.

“The ones that are more hands on are not things I necessarily would have done in the classroom,” Morin said.

Many of the activities are designed for kids to do independently. From a variety of license plate games and activities to brain teasers and grocery store bingo, there’s something for so many scenarios. “Coaster Hockey” is among Morin’s favorites in the book, though she said it’s hard to choose just one favorite.

The book already has gotten the seal of approval from Morin’s own kids, too.

“My youngest is 5, and over the Fourth of July weekend, I had just gotten one of my author copies [of the book], and I looked in the rearview mirror and he was working on the dot-to-dots,” Morin said.

Morin advises parents avoid working through the book cover to cover and instead pick and

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Danny Cashman of ‘The Nite Show’ reflects on program’s history, hosting

BY SHELBY HARTIN
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Dan Cashman can pinpoint the moment he knew what he wanted to do when he grew up.

He was 9 years old and was hosting a slumber party in his basement. His neighborhood friends were busy socializing while the television screen was flickering between scenes in the background.

Cashman isn’t sure why the television suddenly caught his attention, but he found himself transfixed.

“I remember it clear as day,” Cashman said. “I just stopped. I remember walking through the room, stopping dead in my tracks, sitting on my sleeping bag and pillow and just staring up at the TV.”

David Letterman was introducing the guests — Chicago film

critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert — on his late-night talk show.

“I don’t know why, but I was fascinated by it,” Cashman said. “I started watching him as much as I could at that young age. ... It was shortly after I started watching Letterman when I said ‘I want to do that when I’m older.’”

And he did — at least part time, in addition to his full-time job as a communications professional.

The earliest version of “The Nite Show with Danny Cashman” first aired on a WB affiliate from 1997 to 1999. Cashman and a group of friends would get together every couple of weeks to film the show with a single camcorder. Using sheets as a backdrop, 90 episodes were aired in total.

“We didn’t know what we were doing. None of us,” Cashman said. “None of us had a TV background. We were all kids in college — high school for some of us — throwing

a TV show together and putting it on the air. Looking back, that’s just crazy.”

After his college experience with late night television, Cashman began yet another incarnation of “The Nite Show.” Another 45 episodes were filmed and aired before it was canceled.

“I thought it was done. I thought it was over with,” Cashman said.

Cashman then went to work at Gov. John Baldacci’s office as a communications professional. Later, he started his own business, Cashman Communications, and was approached about starting up the show again.

“I said, ‘No way. Not a chance in hell.’” But still he started to think about it.

“Suddenly, I got about as high and mighty as I’m gonna get and said if this is going to happen I need it to do certain things. I need people who know what they’re



“The Nite Show with Danny Cashman” has welcomed many guests since 2010, including Marc Summers.

doing shooting it, I want it to be in a place where there’s an audience and I want it to be on [WABI TV5], not thinking there was a prayer that any of those things would happen,” Cashman said.

“And then they all happened.” Since 2010, “The Nite Show with Danny Cashman” has re-

corded 197 episodes in front of a live audience with shooting done by the New England School of Communications and live music provided by the Jump City Jazz Band. The show initially was taped at the Next Generation Theatre in Brewer before moving to

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