Grape Expectations

Doug Margerum creates and bottles new “Village” wine for Montecito Village Grocery... Wine Spectator chooses Doug’s 2012 M5 as “Wine of the Day” (stories on pages 12 and 22)

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ON ENTERTAINMENT

Dream Job Now Reality: ex-UCSB Student Returns with Pilobolus

by Steven Libowitz

Pilobolus, who I saw at the Granada Theatre and was just blown away." In mid-2013 his wish was granted, as Loman was named the first-ever apprentice of Pilobolus, the 43-year-old company founded at Dartmouth College that has transcended the genre via appearances at the Academy Awards in 2007, and on Oprah, 60 Minutes, Late Night with Conan O'Brien and Sesame Street.

But that almost didn't happen, too. Although Loman had missed several Pilobolus audition opportunities since graduating in 2012, he was ready to blow off the only one that coincided with his busy schedule just because a friend was visiting from out of town and wanted to have lunch.

"But she said, 'Are you stupid? We'll have lunch another time! Go!'" Hiring Loman as the initial apprentice was a no-brainer, said Itamar Kubovy, Pilobolus executive producer.

"He wasn't quite ready to be able to dance for our main company," Kubovy said. "But he was winning and funny, and well-balanced and adjusted, and very eager and enthusiastic.... What we're committed to is a group of people who are interesting to each other and want to work collaboratively to make something great and put it on stage. He got that right away."

That first year at Pilobolus was everything Loman hoped it would be, and even more, as his position allowed him to transition between both touring companies and the company's Creative Services division, the more commercial group that does corporate gigs and other non-stage public appearances.

"It was really, really hard at first," he recalled. "They say you go through Pilobolus polio during the first month and it's true. Your whole body feels like it's broken, and you can't move anything. It's really intense."

After adjusting, Loman toured in Mexico and Germany and made a trip to Abu Dhabi, and participated in a shadow work video for the Sochi Olympics. Soon, he found himself immersed in the Pilobolus ethic, where the choreographers and dancers work together to create pieces, often in collaboration with other artists and even leaders from non-dance endeavors.

"It's not the normal thing you expect from modern dance," he explained. "It's not about how great our technique is or, how high you can get your leg up in the air. It's about the moments we create together, and the interaction with the audience. Every work is credited to the whole company, and it's a lot more rewarding than just having work set on us as dancers."

Now, having been hired full time as one of the six dancers in the main company last August, Loman is set to make his triumphant return to Santa Barbara when Pilobolus once again visits the Granada on Monday night.

"I am insanely beyond excited," he said. "Those powerful dancers I watched up on stage - the ones who made me star-struck in college - are the same people who I'm now performing with. I mean, some of the people who I was in dance class with at UCSB are still in school. It's crazy."

Loman appears in "The Inconsistent Peddler," where a lead woman dancer powers a stationary bike via pedals as a metaphor for driving a family, for which Loman had a big hand in helping to create "pretty much the whole second half," he said. "When we present an idea, people add on to it and we all work on it. After a while, it's hard to remember who created what. It's always changing and evolving, as people take the ideas and run."

He'll be an observer, though, for "On the Nature of Things," even though Loman helped create the opening movements for the piece in which three dancers share a pedestal 3 by-36 feet; it's double-cast as Santa Barbara isn't his turn. But we'll see him in the rest of the program, including "All is Not Lost," a collaboration with OK Go for which the dancers perform on a glass table with a camera positioned underneath "to provide a kaleidoscope effect as we jump on and off," Loman said. He'll also be in "Automaton," as one of the cyborg-humanoid beings "discovering our humanity," and "Day 2," which Loman credited as his favorite piece to perform. "We get to let our- selves go and do some really bad-ass moves. It's very primal."

Loman will also be on hand during a community dance class on Sunday evening at Gustafson Dance Studio and teach a master class back at UCSB, a reprise of one he participated in as a student. "I'd like to teach exactly some of the same people who were my colleagues at school," he said. "It's amazing to come full circle."
A choreography BASHH is on the New Vic horizonographers, this year expanding to aerial dancing and swing with a comedic edge. "We also have a couple of young Russian dancers who will just knock your socks off," Curtis promised.

The idea is not only to put on a performance, but also to recruit new students and keep the cycle going, Curtis said. "The message is to encourage people that if you'd like to do this, here are the people you can learn from and be on stage yourself. You can choose to dance what you like watching."

So what does it take to go from two left feet to the stage?

"Dedication and practice," Curtis said. "It's just a matter of committing yourself to dance. Then you let the teachers mold and shape you. Anybody can do it. You just have to learn the technique."

(BASHH takes to the stage at the New Vic at 7:30 pm Friday, November 14, and 2 & 7:30 pm Saturday, November 15. The final show will be followed by a post-performance gala on stage, where guests will enjoy refreshments and an opportunity to dance the night away with the performers and other dance enthusiasts. For tickets and information, visit www.bashh.com.)

Juggle This! Karamazov Return

After four decades, everybody knows that there is no flying, no Russians, and no brothers in the Flying Karamazov Brothers (FKB) — the comedy-juggling troupe that took its names from the Dostoevsky novel and its brand of physical comedy from vaudeville. But there is something of a son.

One of the newer "brothers," Stephen O'Bent (who goes by Zossima in the show), is just 27, which means he was born 14 years after FKB's first performance. "The weird thing is his parents' first date was at one of our shows," said Paul David Magid (Dimitri), who co-founded the quartet with fellow UC Santa Cruz students in 1973. Meaning, if the Flying Karamazov Brothers didn't exist, O'Bent wouldn't exist.

Those kinds of existential questions don't plague Magid, the only original member still performing; such machinations would only distract from the concentration needed to create and put on the shows in which the "brothers" wear everything from tails to tutus and kilts, and tell lots of jokes and stories and/or play music as they perform precise juggling routines. Magid talked about the troupe over the phone earlier this week in advance of their Family Fun series show at 3 pm Sunday, November 16, at UCSB's Campbell Hall.

Q. You're the last surviving original member. What keeps you going?
A. I still find it refreshing and a joy. I enjoy getting a good laugh. Being on stage is liberating and exciting, and I can still perform — so what's not to like?

What's the secret to being a good juggler?

Be very persistent and willing to accept failure as the norm. Juggling is dropping. To accomplish anything is a defiance of gravity. You know you're going to lose eventually. You just hope for a temporary victory over the forces of nature. And if you understand juggling at its deepest level, you realize it's just music in action. Some of the best jugglers are mathematicians, because it's really just equations. It's the same language. When we write out routines, we do it on staff paper, like music. You can put it on a music stand and learn it without being around another juggler.

Why is juggling such a good foundation for comedy?

Because it's about failure! There are so many shades, and that's always fun. And there's the relationship between magic and juggling. Magid is about skill in misdirection. In juggling, we want you to see exactly what we're doing, so you can understand just how difficult it is!

After 41 years, how much do you still practice?

If we're making a new show, we work up to 20 hours a day, it seems. If we're doing one we know, it's only four or five. Coming up with something new is very difficult, and juggling happens faster than thought, so it's about training your brain to get out of the way. It can take months to get one new routine ready for the stage.

What will be seen here in Santa Barbara this time around?

It's the basic show we did in our last extended run in New York. We'll do "Jazz," which has a lot of improvisation, and plenty of music. There are some signature pieces like the Terror Trick (juggling nine objects of different sizes, shapes and weights, including a meat cleaver, a burning torch, a ukulele, a raw egg, a frying pan, a block of dry ice, a salt shaker, a rubber fish that squirts water, and a bottle of champagne), plus The Gamble. That's the one where The Champ has to juggle any three objects people in the audience have brought to the show, except it has to weight between one ounce and 10 pounds and can't be alive or something that might make The Champ not alive. He's risking a pie in the face for a standing ovation if he succeeds.

You say "he," but you're The Champ, right? If juggling is all about failure, how many pies have you had to taste?

I haven't kept track, but I know I'm doing better than two out of three, maybe even three out of four. It depends on how tough the audience is when they vote, and the relationships of the objects to each other. If I get something slimy, and something bulky and heavy... Wait! I'm not going to say anymore. I don't want to give anyone ideas.

Not Just for Kids: Boxtales Turns 20

Michael Andrews had no grand visions of the future in 1994 when he joined Boxtales Theatre Company co-founders Joseph Velasco and Michael Katz to create the children's theater company sponsored by the Lobero Theatre Foundation as a literary arts outreach program to replace lost funding in the public schools. "They gave it over to us artists, and we had our own inspirations about reinventing the theater," Andrews

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