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Comic turns divorce woes into one-woman comedy show

"Divorce Diaries" comes to EastVille Comedy Club on Saturday.

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Divorce Diaries will open at EastVille Comedy Club this weekend. Photo: EastVille

Can divorce be funny?

Michele Traina certainly thinks hers was.

The Clifton, New Jersey, native split with her husband about five years ago, at age 32.

“I moved back home with my parents, but not just my parents. My twin brother lived at home, my handicapped dog, my now-deceased grandmother who was 95 and in diapers, her nursing aid, who was off her rocker,” Traina told the *Brooklyn Eagle*. “My daughter was going through therapy, she wasn’t talking; my ex-husband had gambled money away, money of mine ... So it was one thing after another. And I was dating, too.”

Even as things unraveled around her, Traina recognized the absurdity of it all, and started keeping a journal. Now 38 and a full-time theater teacher, she’s touring the country with a one-woman show about the experiences chronicled in her writing. The performance is titled “Divorce Diaries,” and it will make its Brooklyn debut Saturday night at EastVille Comedy Club on Atlantic Avenue.



“It’s half stand-up and then half is an improv section, where it’s kind of like a game show, but there’s also a little bit of sketch [comedy] in there,” Traina said. “It’s always evolving.”

Traina interacts with the audience throughout much of the show. During one portion, she delivers monologues while embodying a few of her exes — her husband and a couple other men she dated after her divorce — and asks the audience to guess the jaw-dropping secret they’d kept from her while they were together. (She says this bit is always a crowd favorite.)

But Traina is well equipped to handle the dynamic, think-on-her-feet performance. She started dancing in second grade, then did musical theater throughout high school. In college, she earned a bachelor’s degree in theater and worked in the field as a performer for five years. Around the time she got married, Traina decided to become a teacher, judging the steady hours and lack of required travel more conducive to starting a family. She still performed part time, even after having her daughter, and says, no matter what, she will always find time to take to a stage.

But five and a half years of marriage was enough for Traina, and once she’d compiled enough material from her journal entries — which took just six months — she pieced together the initial “Divorce Diaries” show.

At first, it didn’t have the desired effect on the audience.

“My friends came to see one of the first performances of it in a theater in New York and they were crying,” Traina said. “I thought, I don’t want that.”

Employing some of what she learned while studying comedy at the Upright Citizens Brigade school, Traina re-worked “Divorce Diaries” into something more light-hearted.

“As much as divorce is depressing for some people, it actually isn’t for me. It’s the thing that woke me up [to] where I’m supposed to be in life,” Traina said. “There’s a reason for [hard times], and you’ve got to find out why that struggle is going to help you and help others.”

Divorce is, of course, universal. Traina has brought her “Divorce Diaries” to Albany, Chicago, even Las Vegas. Clubs in New Jersey and Manhattan have welcomed Traina to the stage, too, and after her EastVille gig she’s traveling with the show to Nashville, Tennessee, as well as Huntsville and Birmingham, Alabama. Traina told the *Eagle* that countless audience members have shared their divorce experiences with her, helping to fuel the catharsis she already experiences with the piece.

“They feel like they’re not alone,” Traina said of the revealing showgoers. “If someone can walk away from this experience, feeling motivated or just relief about something in their life, then I’ve done my job.”

*Tickets for “Divorce Diaries” are \$11 and can be purchased on the **EastVille Comedy Club website**. Showtime is 6 p.m. on Saturday.*
