

THE DAILY GAZETTE | Monday, December 2, 2019

# ARTS

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## Comic Traina finds humor in divorce

Performs tonight (Oct. 18) at the Funny Bone

Bill Buell [@buell\\_bill](#) | October 18, 2018



Michele Traina

PHOTOGRAPHER: PHOTO PROVIDED



However, the Clifton, New Jersey, native doesn't get too specific with the details, and she's certainly not one to heap verbal abuse on her ex-husband.

"I know he knows I do stand-up, and I know he knows about my show, but I'd just as soon keep him out of the act," said Traina, who will bring her show to the Funny Bone in Crossgates Mall Thursday (Oct. 18) at 7:30 p.m. "Sometimes he's fine, sometimes he's annoying, but we peacefully coexist. We don't have to be friends. He makes me appreciate the other men in my life."

No, divorce isn't a lot of fun, she says, but a lot of people seem to be doing it, so why not try to get a few laughs out of it.

"I've been divorced for four years now, and that's what inspired this show," she said. "People look at it as pretty depressing, but if you have to go through it why not make a little fun out of it. You can laugh about how crazy everyday life is, and it doesn't mean you have to be divorced to enjoy my show. You can be married, you can be a single parent going through transition. Everybody will see things they can relate to in my act."

Traina's entry into the entertainment industry wasn't as a comedian. After going to Adelphi University on Long Island to study theater, she worked in the musical theater world for a few years before returning to school to get a master's in education at New York University.

"I did a bunch of tours with a children's theater company, and I also did some performing at the New England Shakespeare Festival," said Traina. "Then I went back to school to NYU so I could teach, and I'm still doing that full-time. I also started my own theater company for children with special needs. I have kind of a funky schedule, but most mornings I'm driving my 6-year-old Grace to school and then teaching. During the summer I enjoy teaching and performing at a lot of libraries and summer camps."

When did stand-up comedy, you might ask, come into the picture?

"In college I had a one-woman show that I tried to make funny, and then I was also doing improv," she said. "Then I just didn't have the time to do everything I wanted to do, and I think I viewed stand-up as being too difficult. Two years ago I decided to just go for it. I took a class at Caroline's and that kind of got me into the mix."

She has since performed at Caroline's, one of the top comedy clubs in New York, and has also done her stand-up act at the Gotham Comedy Club and the Broadway Comedy Club in New York City. One of the elements of her act that make it unique is that Traina isn't afraid to get the audience involved.

"We might have people write a line on a card about how they feel about their ex, what they might want to say to that person, and then I will act that out with another comic," explained Traina. "I usually do it with another comic who's at the show, or maybe even an audience member. It's my improv experience getting into the show. Everyone could contribute."

Along with being a comedian and a teacher, Traina is also a dancer.

"I was definitely into musicals when I was younger, and dancing was a huge part of what I was doing," she said. "I always wanted to perform, but I think I was pretty shy when I was younger. I always enjoyed watching the choreographer with the dancers. Then when I got older I started creating my own stories and characters, and comedy was usually an element in that."

Traina grew up loving a number of comedians, including Roseanne Barr and the cast of "The Golden Girls," and she's currently a big fan of Dave Chapelle.

"I watch his Netflix show over and over again, and I love his storytelling and how he relates comedy to today's current events," she said. "I was a huge fan of 'The Golden Girls.' The writing on that show was great with those wonderful ladies going back and forth. I was 12 laughing at these middle-aged ladies, and I've tried to model my humor in that way. I also liked Roseanne. I know she's gotten herself in trouble lately, and she needs to kind of get back in the center of things, but I still like her. Her show was about working hard and being a part of the middle class. I liked that."

### 'Divorce Diaries' with Michele Traina

WHERE: Funny Bone Comedy Club, 1 Crossgates Mall, Albany

WHEN: Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

HOW MUCH: \$12

MORE INFO: (518) 313-7484, or [albany.funnybone.com](http://albany.funnybone.com)

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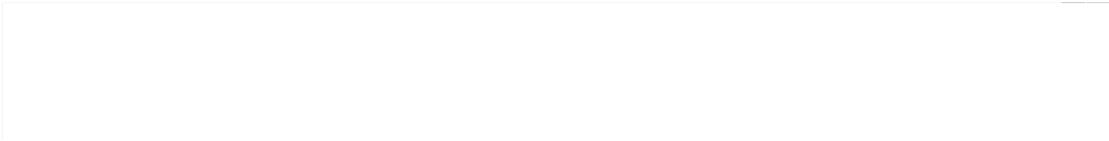
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## Jukebox: Jam band royalty with funny name on verge of arena record

Next week Phish will beat Billy Joel's record of 11 Knickerbocker/Pepsi/Times Union Center sell-outs

Michael Hochanadel/For The Daily Gazette | [October 12, 2018](#)





Phish, shown at a previous SPAC performance, is set for sold-out shows at the Times Union Center on Oct. 16 and 17.

PHOTOGRAPHER: GAZETTE FILE

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No time to get acquainted with the quiet guy on the other end of an amp case backstage at the Times Union Center. Jerry Garcia came along, headed for the stage, so we stopped talking. At the Grateful Dead's last show there, my amp-case neighbor, Phish bassist Mike Gordon, was star-struck awed as I was, though Phish would play there the next year.

Tuesday and Wednesday, Phish plays it again, two miles from Pauly's Hotel, where they first played Albany in the mid-1980s. Promoter Don Dworkin recalls Phish played for the door (\$3 a person!), drew about 20 and took less than \$100 back to Burlington. "Nobody knew them, and they spelled their name funny!"

Everybody knows Phish now: They're jam-band royalty, still spelling their name funny. Next week they'll beat Billy Joel's record of 11 Knickerbocker/Pepsi/Times Union Center sell-outs. (The Grateful Dead and successors have played the place 13 times, nearly all sell-outs, and recorded the three-CD set "Dozin' At the Knick" (1996), but I digress.)

Remember, after Phish on Tuesday, more jams happen at the Parish Public House (388 Broadway, Albany) – it's Phunk Night with an all-star jam-down just a block away. Natalie Cressman (Trey Anastasio Band trombonist); Chris Bullock (Snarky Puppy saxophonist); Beau Sasser (organ) and Chris DeAngelis (guitar), both of Kung Fu; Justin Hendricks (guitar) and Ilana Morris (vocals), both of Wurliday hit right after Phish quits that night. \$15 advance, \$20 door. 518-465-0444 [www.parishpublichouse.com](http://www.parishpublichouse.com)

Then on Wednesday – again, right after Phish – the Funky Dawgz Brass Band plays the Parish Public House. Same ticket prices as Tuesday

#### EGG SALAD

Melissa Etheridge returns to The Egg on Saturday in a sold-out show celebrating the 25th anniversary of her star-making "Yes I Am" album and launching a strong string of concerts. Acoustic Hot Tuna on Sunday is also sold-out.

However, tickets remain for "Strings in Harmony" Saturday featuring brothers Lakshay (sitar) and Aayush Mohan (sarod), usually with a tabla player and always improvising on a folk melody or raga. The sitar sings the melody, the sarod supports it with drones and tabla decorates the rhythm. 7:30 p.m. \$35, \$30, students \$15. 518-473-1845 [www.theegg.org](http://www.theegg.org)

And yet, The Egg's New York State Performing Arts Presenters Fall Showcase on Monday may be its coolest event all week. This free show by top performers features blues/folk/jazz/anything singer Maria Muldaur, jazz drummer Bobby Previte's Blueprints Ensemble and acoustic roots-music stars Richie Stearns and Rosie Newton; plus Garth Fagan Dance and Bridgman Packer Dance. Remember, it's free. 7:30 p.m.

#### CAFFE MENU

Caffe Lena (47 Phila St., Saratoga Springs) serves tasty offerings all weekend. Johnny Irion sings tonight. Familiar from folk duets with wife Sarah Lee Guthrie, Irion plugged in and rocked on "Driving Friend," a driving yet friendly and all-around terrific record with members of Wilco, Dawes and others. Yeah, Sarah Lee sings on it, and Nate Modisette's Paul McCartney-like bass lines make it go. 7 p.m. \$14 advance, \$16 door, \$8 students and children. 518-583-0022 [www.caffelena.org](http://www.caffelena.org)

Friday, singer-songwriter-guitarist deluxe Jack Williams takes over. Peter Yarrow (PP&M) calls the South Carolina-born finger-picker "best guitar player I've ever heard." Deep songs and weathered singing are tops, too. 8 p.m. \$20 advance, \$22 door, \$11 students and children

Saturday, keyboardist/producer Professor Louie brings in his Crowmatix to rock the Caffe. They're all Woodstock super side-people: Miss Marie, vocals and percussion; Gary Burke, drums; Frank Campbell, bass; and John Platania, guitar. Maybe horns, too. \$22 advance, \$25 door; \$12.50 students and children

Sunday, the Caffe welcomes back Walt Michael & Co.; the dulcimer master is a longtime favorite. 7 p.m. \$22 advance, \$24 door, \$12 students and children

**GLOBAL GOODS**

Continuing a run of world-music artists that Mamadou Kelly and Sona Jobarteh started last week, all-woman Latin-jazz quartet Ladama plays the Sanctuary for Independent Media (3361 6thAve., Troy) Friday. Venezuelan Mafer Fernanda Gonzalez Olivo plays mandola, violin, cuatro and bandola. Brazilian Lara Klaus and Colombian Daniela Serna play percussion and New York City-based Sara Lucas plays guitar. Their dancey, spirited self-named debut album hit last year. 7 p.m. \$20. 518-272-2390 www.mediasanctuary.org

**MODEST PALACE**

Pacific Northwest (Seattle, now Portland) indie-rockers Modest Mouse play Sunday at the Palace (19 Clinton Ave. at North Pearl Street., Albany), making a sound as full and fierce as Animal Collective or Arcade Fire, but faster on its feet.

Even without ex-Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr, onboard for an album and a tour, Modest Mouse sounds big and burly: Isaac Brock and Jim Fairchild, stringed things and keyboards; Jeremiah Green, drums; Tom Peloso and Russell Higbee, bass and more; Lisa Molinaro, violin and keyboards; and percussionists Ben Massarella and Davey Brozowski. Most sing; Brock leads.

They're reportedly working on their 12th album, part two of "Strangers to Ourselves" (2015), a terrific record that beautifully style-checks Talking Heads, XTC, Pavement and other fearless trail-breakers. Tropical F\*ck Storm opens. 8 p.m. \$49.50. 800-745-3000 www.palacealbany.org

**REARVIEW = JAZZ X 2**

Keith Pray led his Big Soul Ensemble again into "Free Bird" Tuesday (Oct. 2) at the Van Dyck last Tuesday, a detour into Southern rock repeated from the previous month. He'd called modern big-band touchstones for stability, but the alto sax-man, arranger and leader likes surprises.

Check the trumpet ambush in "Meetin' and Greetin'" when the 17-piece band simmered in quiet welcome until a giant brass blast about blew out the walls! They revved from gentle to gigantic again in "I Can't Stop Lovin' You," but even when sailing on an even keel in trumpeter Dylan Canterbury's "Quiet Revolution" or tenor ace Brian Patneau's "Unending," the Big Soul Ensemble sounded beautifully big and always soulful

I love how Pray's arrangements challenge his soloists; a player will be in full flight when a section charges into the soundscape so the soloist has to hit another gear to stay level. Wish those cats played more often than just the first Tuesday of every month!

When Full Circle (which also features Canterbury) played the (unofficial) "local heroes" slot in A Place for Jazz last Friday, leader/drummer Cliff Brucker professed reverence for his band's elder statesman Leo Russo, a tenor sax-man of beautiful tone and fluent phrasing. Like Russo, they mostly played within their skills, but pianist Larry Ham, in his elegant way, took the most risks and demonstrated the widest stylistic reach, from percussive McCoy Tyner chords to blistering Oscar Peterson runs and Teddy Wilson lyricism.

Just as standards dominated, the players -- Brucker, Canterbury and Russo with Otto Gardner, bass; and Mike Novakowski, guitar -- seldom reached for odd new implements in the toolbox.

Brucker explained Full Circle only plays one original on each of its two albums, otherwise playing songs "you all know." They started with "The Song is You" and eased into cool-bop Benny Golson, Tadd Dameron, Miles Davis and Horace Silver classics, with bop invention and confident swing. Russo glowed on ballads; his "Emily" was heart-mending, but when they upshifted into the rat-pack swing of Canterbury's "Full Circle," the effect was suave, bright and happy, a perfect first-set closer.

Sonny Rollins' bossa clatter "Airegin" brought everybody back after the break, then Brucker called some audibles in the second set with Silver's added-that-day "Cookin' At the Continental," for example. In this energetic blues, Russo first played a riff in his solo at a gruff swagger before offering a sparser journey through the same chord as if to explain, "Didn't get that? OK, it's like this." Clifford Brown's jaunty "Joy Spring" and Benny Golson's lighter-than-air "Step Lightly" circled us all back home.

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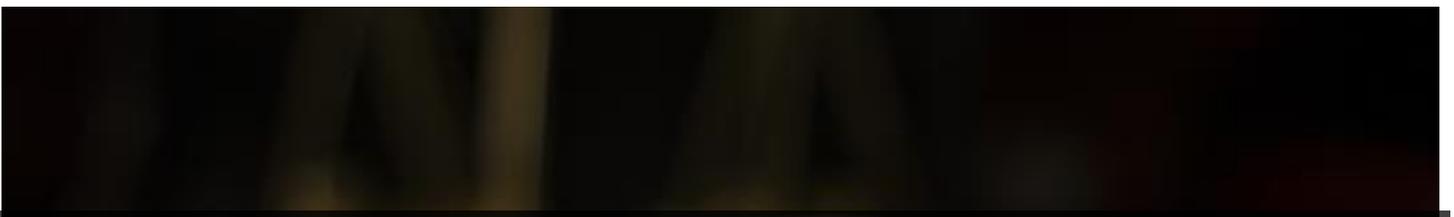


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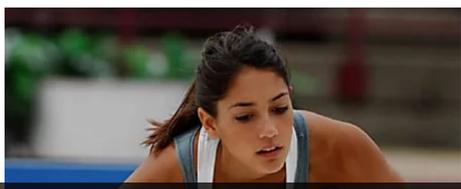
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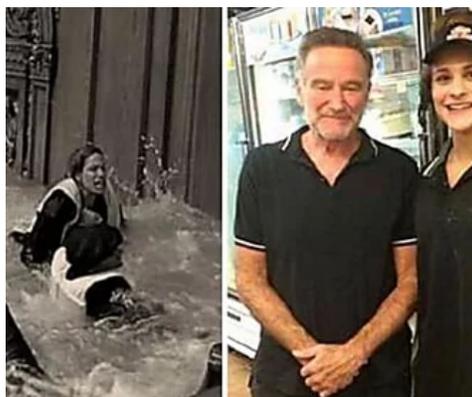
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