

Drinking and Laughing: Harrington brings the ha-has to The Met



Ray Harrington. Source: Rayharringtoncomedy.com

RI jokes aside, the absurdity of reality provides enough fodder for Warwick comedian **Ray Harrington** to get up on stage and make people laugh. Again and again and again.

Harrington - whose status as a Maine transplant gives him some leeway when it comes to dissing such local culinary staples as wieners ("hotdogs with hot meat relish") and pizza strips ("pizza sushi") - has become a regular on the stage at the Comedy Connection and will help introduce the area to a newer concept in stand-up, "Brew-HaHa," on May 6 at The Met.

"Brew-HaHa" is billed as a group drinking game blended with a stand-up comedy show. Presented by Don't Tell Comedy, the experience prompts the audience to drink collectively whenever a comic breaks rules like talking in a funny voice or mentioning their mother. The comics drink, too, so the evening can get very wacky fast.

It will be the first time Harrington has participated in "Brew-HaHa" but not the first time he's mixed drinking with comedy. Assembling his documentary *Be A Man*, for which he examined all the areas in his life he needed to strengthen in preparation for having a child since he lacked a father figure himself growing up, included a stint on a bar seat to find his signature masculine drink.

"I had 12 to 13 drinks in about 90 minutes," he remembers. "There's a solid window where I'm being really funny and charming when I drink. When that window closes, it doesn't open again. I saw that window that day!"

Funny, to Harrington, is examining the absurdities of life in a free-styling, improvisational way like one of his idols, Paul F. Thompson. He prepares very little before stepping on stage, but his shows evolve organically and rapidly.

"I like to riff. The funniest stuff comes at odd moments. I always reach for that moment. Sometimes, a bit comes out of my head that I didn't even know was there!" he says.

He unconsciously reacts to the "feel" of the club itself and the audience's vibe. At Comedy Connection, his home club, he says the crowd always creates a great atmosphere. Hecklers are rarer than people watching online video clips would believe, Harrington says, but he's used to dealing with them.

"The truly negative hecklers are very rare. Usually, it's the ones who peaked in high school kind, or the happy hecklers who forget it's not a conversation," he says.

A marketing major in college, Harrington's friends signed him up as a freshman for a nearby open mic night. He stepped onto the stage, somewhat in shock, and delivered laugh after laugh. His second appearance, for which he planned and wrote material, bombed.

"It just shows me my style is riffing, looking for the right moments," Harrington says now.

At home, his eight-year-old and he like sharing jokes or pithy observations, but the constant togetherness of the pandemic lockdown proved trying for his family at times.

"They'd cringe and I'd say, 'Look, I haven't been able to perform for months. I need you to hear this goof!'" chuckles the comedian, who has appeared on *Conan* and was a finalist in the Boston Comedy Festival. "Comedy is subjective, but I always appreciate the absurdity of reality. I love the ability to look at the mundane things in life and showing how absurd they can be."

For tickets to "Brew-HaHa," go to www.themetri.com. The show is 21+.