

LET IT GO

Highland Park girl stars in Glencoe production of 'Frozen,' Page 20



ALL ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Glenview's The Greenwood Restaurant celebrates six decades, Page 22

LIFE & ARTS
LA

Just for laughs

HP comedy group splits sides at Glenview show, Page 19

The Laughing Academy founder Kim Greene Hiller surprises her husband Jason with a birthday cake, Jan. 17, at the end of this evening's stand-up comedy show. DAVID KRAUS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA



COVER STORY

POSTED TO HPLandmarkDaily.com 2 DAYS AGO

HP comedy group produces sold-out show in Glenview

CATHERINE ROLFES
Freelance Reporter

Chilly temperatures and wind-swept snow didn't stop the show Friday night as a sellout crowd enjoyed a night of stand-up comedy at The Laughing Academy in Glenview.

The talent, however, wasn't so lucky. Inclement weather prevented two of the three scheduled comedians from making it, but organizers dug into their combined rolodexes to find an 11th-hour fill-in before the 8 p.m. curtain rise.

Cancelling was not an option for Kim Greene Hiller, Laughing Academy founder and owner, and Larry Bloom, whose Highland Park-based company Funnier By The Lake produced the show, billed as "Academy After Hours: Stand-Up Comedy." This was the second stand-up showcase TLA has hosted since its theater space opened in August 2019, though Hiller puts on other afterhours showcases geared toward an adult audience, like sketch and improv nights.

"It was the show that almost wasn't," Hiller said. "Every time I've hit a wall in my business though, I've found a door."

The door this time led to Peter-John Byrnes, a veteran comic living in nearby Evanston who both organizers had worked with previously. They reached out and he agreed to brave the shoddy wintery roadways to join the night's lineup, which included headliner Kevin Kellam, a stalwart of the Chicago comedy scene and DJ on alt-rock station WKQX-FM 101.1.

Bloom was slated to be the evening's host, so stepping into a full set was a no-brainer for the comedy pro. And just like that, an entire evening of entertainment was born.

Taking the stage only minutes late, Bloom warmed up the crowd by quipping about divorce, dating, being a Jewish man and the North Shore.

"Who thinks Glenview is the North Shore?" he asked the room, which answered with applause.

"Yes, because you live in Glenview," Bloom continued. "You know who doesn't think Glenview is the North Shore? The people who live in towns with a shore."

Bloom lives in the shometown of Highland Park, where he splits his time working as a comic and marketing professional who also hosts stand-up showcases. Through FBTL, which he founded in 2014, Bloom specializes in producing shows in the suburbs to help bring the top-notch caliber of comedians — normally booked only in cities like Chicago — closer to those that don't want to deal with the longer drive and hassle of parking.

That formula is clearly working well as the show in Glenview sold out quickly.

Bloom ended his 22-minute set by introducing Byrnes as a super-smart, super-funny "go-to guy" who he works often with. "He really is a go-to guy because I texted him and he was here about a half-hour later."

With the confidence of a performer that had been planning his set all week,

Byrnes jumped on stage sporting a Nordic winter sweater, jeans and black horn-rimmed glasses, then went right to the self-deprecating humor.

"That was a very nice introduction by Larry, but he papered over the notion that I'm unsuccessful enough to be home on a Friday night," said Byrnes, a stand-up comic for 35 years. "Also, that he was pretty sure that was the case."

Referencing his choice of owning and wearing "an Icelandic sweater," Byrnes, who has been married for 25 years, swiftly painted his domestic picture.

"You can tell that I have given up," he declared, giving a Vanna White sweep across his chest adding, "that means I'm a parent."

Throughout his 25-minute set, Byrnes continued to mine familiar family stressors, but his finest run of the night came from a bit about bees and fairly traded honey.

"I don't think fairly traded honey exists" he started. "If you don't believe me, ask the bees. They work hard all year, making honey. Then they come home one night and their house has been robbed. That's not a fair trade at all."

The introduction of headliner Kevin Kellam, who almost didn't make it to the show due to weather, was a familiar one for the host as they've been working together for years and "he always crushes it," Bloom said.

Kellam burst onto the stage ready to poke fun at himself. After running through a list of siblings and their extreme success-

es, he lamented that in his mother's heart, "there are dead pets in my family that outrank me."

Kellam meandered back and forth across the stage quipping about how his brothers are more noteworthy. One brother holds a master's degree in chemical engineering. Another brother is a decorated cop in the city and once "ran into a building and saved a family of seven people," he shouted, his loudest level yet. "He's such a good cop, he's doing a firefighter's job at the same time."

Despite his set, Kellam is quite accomplished in his own right. As a comic, he has a strong stage presence and knows how to come at jokes from an un-



Kim Greene Hiller entertains the audience at a stand-up comedy show, Jan. 17, at The Laughing Academy in Glenview. DAVID KRAUS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

expected place. In 2019, he made his debut in the Comedians You Should Know showcase, a critically acclaimed comedy show held weekly in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles.

Thanks to his disc jockey job, he's opened up at private shows for some of the biggest names in alternative music, including Twenty-One Pilots, Foster the People and Panic! At the Disco.

GlassWorks.net

Installing Glass Throughout Chicagoland

- Residential
- Commercial
- Retail

1814 Pickwick Avenue
Glenview, IL 60026
Ph: 847.729.5580
Email: sales@glassworks.net
www.GlassWorks.net