

Thom Wall prop installed in museum

Special to the Reformer

MIDDLETOWN, OHIO — When an exchange student introduced fourth-grader Thom Wall to juggling using four rocks, he was hooked. He buried himself in “The Complete Juggler: All the Steps from Beginner to Professional,” by Dave Finnigan, practiced with bean bags he got at the toy store, learned to juggle three balls, and eventually practiced with juggling clubs his grandmother bought him. Today, he tours internationally in collaborative shows including the “Dinner and a Show” show with Benjamin Domask, with circus artist Chloe Walier whose feature act is walking on champagne bottles, with big-name troupes including Cirque du Soleil (with whom he is currently trotting the globe), and as a solo act. Recently, Wall and his wine glass prop from his mouthstick act were inducted into the Museum of Juggling History alongside his idols and heroes. “I was delighted. It is humbling and flattering to have my work recognized like this,” Wall said.

David Cain, curator of the museum said, “Thom is one of the brightest stars in the juggling world. He has a wide array of skills but what he is known for few people (jugglers) do.”

Wall holds a bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis in Germanic Languages and Literatures, as well as a master's degree from Drexel University in Nonprofit Arts Administration. He has been juggling professional since his graduation in 2009 from Washington University. His training at Brattleboro's New England Center for Circus Arts' Pro-Track program in 2011-2012 launched him even further as a juggling performer.

Wall's comedic routines are a display of great stage presence, physical strength, sharp wit, incredible control and balance to amaze and amuse as he flips and bounces around a variety of props. Lauded the “Master of Modern Vaudeville,” Wall's mouthstick act at the International Jugglers' Association Seniors 2014 included props such as a wine bottle, a three-arm candelabra, one to six wine glasses, and even a balloon, all in precarious predicaments while intermittently pretending to almost drop one piece or another, raising audible gasps from the audience. He varies the mouthstick act by using a knife clenched between the teeth instead to balance the wine glasses on. A glass from this routine is the prop installed at the museum.

He has expanded his skill set to include forgotten juggling forms, particularly “gentleman juggling,” tossing everyday items like tea



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THOM WALL

Thom Wall's performance, above, at the 2017 American Youth Circus Festival opening gala show this year, in Trenton, N.J. Below, one of Wall's wine glasses used in his mouthstick act that is installed at the Museum of Juggling History.



cups and plates and gentleman's attire, infused with a comedy routine. According to Wikipedia, there are very few jugglers practicing “gentleman juggling” today. He is also pursuing contemporary ball technique and is now training with a Borzykine Pole — a 10-inch square platform balanced on a meter-long pole, balancing a ball on top while juggling five balls. It brings the “Ed Sullivan

Show” to mind doesn't it? Wall noted it is important to stay versatile.

Wall has mastered these techniques in what he called a “learn-as-I-go” manner. He finds old juggling videos, does some reverse engineering to figure out how they did it, and brings them to his act, a process he described as, “Interesting and frustrating.”

His hard work has paid off, honored with an invite to participate in the Circus Arts program at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival's 50th Anniversary, he has performed in Hong Kong and South Korea, toured with with Cirque du Soleil's show Totem, where he juggled for thousands each night on tour across the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. He has won awards internationally for his circus performances, notably the 2015 “People's Choice” Spe-

cial Prize at the Riga International Circus Festival in Latvia, the Bronze and Silver medals at the International Jugglers'.

Cain said, “I've seen Thom develop over the years from a standard comedy juggler with good comedy skills, but he has separated himself from the pack. I see the daily effort he has put into his act. Juggling requires the same skills as other performance arts, and Thom has put in the time in training. He is quality.”

According to Cain, the Museum of Juggling History is the only juggling museum in the world. Filled with vintage and contemporary juggling props, videos, and photos honoring over 150 jugglers and their acts, it takes days to see it all, and some people do, spending four or five days to look it over.

BURDICK'S

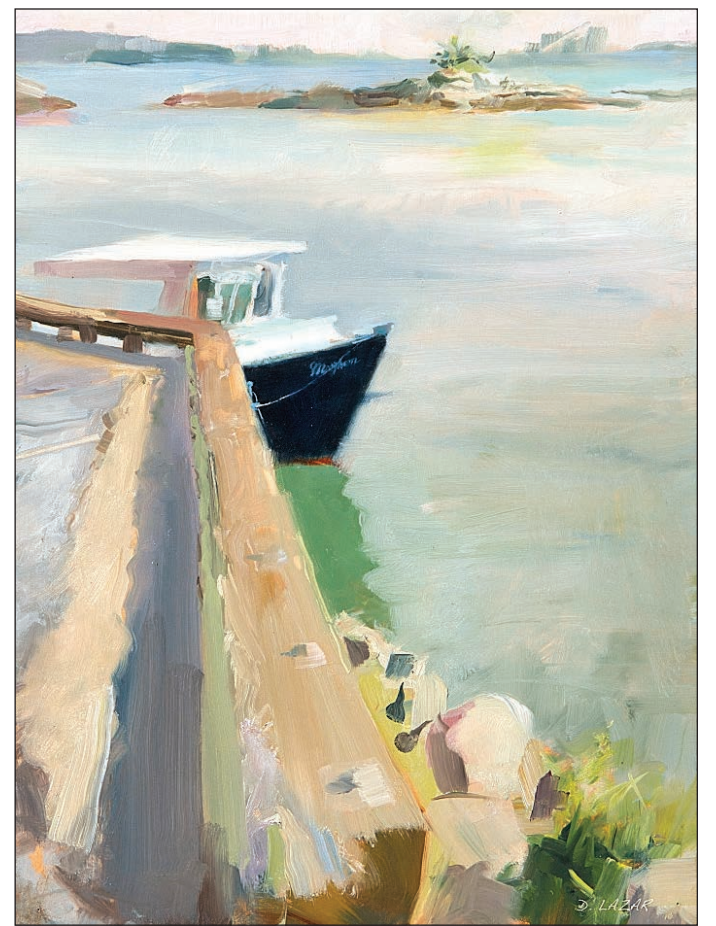


PHOTO PROVIDED BY DEBORAH LAZAR

“Mayhem, Stonington, ME” oil on linen by Deborah Lazar.

Local painter showcases the seasons

Special to the Reformer

PUTNEY — Local painter Deborah Lazar presents “Paintings: Memories Rekindled, Forgotten Things, Familiar Places” at Burdick's Restaurant, 47 Main St., Walpole, N.H., from Sept. 3 through 30. This collection of 20 plein-air paintings showcases the New England seasons in her garden, with paintings of flowers and landscapes from the area, as well as several from the coast of Maine.

Lazar began her artist journey as a painter at Windham College, and followed that passion through a career in graphic design, photography, video production and back to painting. In 2007, she took up painting again in a new studio built for her, at her home in Putney.

Lazar explains, “My paintings are from direct observation of real places with real objects, and real people. I work primarily from life, which requires having a portable studio that travels with me everywhere.” She works mostly in oil paint and her impressionist-realist style is quite deliberate, she continued “... Beginning with a clear idea of how I will place my subject on the canvas, and deciding what the dominant colors will be. The painting evolves like a photograph in a developing tray, gradually as time goes by, the image takes form.”

One of her paintings, “E. B. White's Cottage,” was done in Blue Hill, Maine where she

has a curious connection to author E. B. White. She was delighted to find the new owner of his property graciously invited her to paint it. Her late father, William Lazar, a CBS Radio and TV announcer had recorded the story “Farewell My Lovely,” in 1941, co-authored by Lee Strout and E.B. White. Lazar said, “I've gone back every year and painted at E. B. White's cabin and it is very humbling. This is where he wrote “Charlotte's Web” and many other great works in this tiny cabin which is totally isolated on the bay.” Included in the September show is a link where you can stream the audio and listen to the 17-minute story.

Lazar won the Byran Alden award for painting from Academic Artists Association and has juried into numerous Plein-air painting competitions across the United States, including Telluride, Co., and Tequesta, Fla. She earned a BFA degree in Studio Art at Windham College in 1975, where she learned how to mount a show, a skill she still uses today. At Windham, she studied with Harold Feinstein, Chuck Ginnever, David Rohn and Peter Forakis.

A reception for the artist will be held at Burdick's, Monday, Sept. 25, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Lazar's work can also be seen at Vermont Artisan Designs, 106 Main St., Brattleboro and during the 14th annual Putney Craft Tour — Thanksgiving weekend 2017.

Cautionary tale about courage at Playhouse

Special to the Reformer

CHESTERFIELD, N.H. — The Actors Theatre Playhouse closes its 2017 season with a Main Stage production of one of Chekhov's masterpieces, “Uncle Vanya.”

It's a comic and dramatic cautionary tale about the courage it takes to overcome the invisible suffering of ordinary people, the futility of service to others, and the fragility of beauty and illusions.

The story revolves around a retired professor who, returning to his estate to live with his young wife, Yelena, mindlessly manages to trip over “sleeping dogs,” unleashing a whirlwind of passion and disillusionment.

The estate once belonged to the professor's first wife, now deceased, and her brother and daughter, Sonya, still live there.

Add the desolate and dispassionate physician Astrov,

along with the household servants, and you have the setting for this classic of the Russian theater.

The eight performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., from Sept. 22 through Oct. 18.

All tickets are \$15 (students on Fridays are \$8). Reservations are highly recommended and can be reserved at the 877-666-1855.

Visit atplayhouse.org for more information.

Wardsboro Curtain Call, Inc. presents Neptune's Car

Special to the Reformer

WARDSBORO — From homeschooling lessons to live shows to recording sessions, that's the arc of the song-writing career of Holly Hanson. She and Steve Hayes are the acoustic folk duo Neptune's Car, and will perform Saturday, Sept. 16, at the Wardsboro Town Hall, Main Street.

Music begins at 7 p.m.; doors open at 6:30 p.m.. Admission is \$10 at the door.

Their unique name comes from the true story of a clipper ship captained by Mary Patten.

In 1857, despite being pregnant, caring for her sick husband, and fighting off mutiny from the first mate, Patten successfully navigated the ship, Neptune's Car, around Cape Horn to San Francisco.

Hanson played music all through school, then took a 20-year hiatus to raise her kids. She jumped back

into performing.

Hayes comes from a musical family, from a grandfather who played guitar, banjo, and ukulele, to his brother Kevin, a founding member of Old Crow Medicine Show. He's an award-winning guitar player who can play just about anything with strings.

Visit wardsborocurtaincall.net or email kwkmdavis@yahoo.com for more information about the Neptune's Car show.

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