

# Islander living his dream through performance art

By Stacy Jones

There are dozens of words one could apply to Andrew Potter. Cautious isn't one of them.

After graduating from URI in 1980, Potter and a buddy moved to San Francisco to pursue their dream of becoming performance artists.

"I liked the idea of writing, directing and being self-employed," Potter said.

Given the high cost of San Francisco real estate and the relatively low pay of street performers, Potter and his performing partner took the only apartment they could afford: A beer tank in a shuttered brewery that the owner was renting out for \$200 a month.

"You get what you pay for," Potter said. "We were the only ones there who were working to make a living. The only ones who marched out the door everyday and went to work."

Potter ultimately spent 15 years in California, performing as a storyteller and all-around vaudeville act. He returned to the East Coast in 1996, after he had married and had a child.

"I got tired of performing all the time," he said.

Today, Potter is rejuvenated and has expanded his repertoire to include multimedia shows. His latest show recounts his experiences as a street performer in the High Street Circus, as his San Francisco act was called.

The act included comedy, juggling, fire eating and unicycle rid-

ing. One feature of the show had Potter juggling six objects – a rubber chicken, a fire torch, a brush, a toilet plunger, a racquet and a club – while riding a unicycle.

Although Potter and his partner started off as jugglers, they weren't very good at it. So instead, they took a different approach.

"Juggling was difficult, so we decided to make it look more difficult than it really was. There was a lot of dropping things and soon we'd find ourselves in this situation, this problem," he said.

The tension hooked their audiences.

"They would get on our side and start rooting for us," Potter said.

This approach of taking a liability and incorporating it into a show worked well for Potter. It led to his act capturing first place in a street performance contest in Milan, Italy. "We didn't know the language and were asking ourselves 'What are we going to do?'"

The solution: Learn a few key phrases and turn their various body parts into human cheat sheets.

"When we needed to speak, I would look at the appropriate body part for guidance," Potter said. "The audience would feel sympathy and help us with pronunciations. It worked so well we won the contest."

Although street performing may not hold the glamour of traditional theater, the feel of street performing worked for Potter.

"It's very intimate, no fourth wall," he said. "You talk to your audience and they get to talk to you."

## A new artistic vision

With a past full of successes, Potter has again thrown caution to the wind. He has recast his art, elevating his storytelling and street performing to multimedia stage presentations.

After earning a master's degree in video production from Emerson College in Boston, Potter was inspired to create a new artistic vision.

His latest production, "The Road to High Street," is based on his life and personal experiences. The show still uses storytelling, but with additional layers of music, photos, special lighting, videos and a large screen to capture the images.

Potter doesn't feel he or his audiences will lose anything in the re-vamp.

"I think I can create the same kind of intimacy," he said. "Visuals are very, very strong. You can describe something as much as you want, but people may not see it in their minds. Multimedia adds a certain clarity."

For example, the beer tank Potter used to call home is part of the show and most people, said Potter, "couldn't visualize that bizarre space without a visual."

But "The Road to High Street" is not a simple rehashing of Potter's San Francisco years.

There are deeper messages to be gained from his story, he said. One is "going after your dream. Doing something that we really believe in."

Another, he said, is "the personal struggle of figuring out what to do in life and taking a risk to achieve it."

Potter learned such lessons not just by performing, but also from his father.

"My father went through a similar thing. He wanted to be a boat designer, but his father talked him out of it," he said.

Potter's father ended up going into business before serving in the Navy during World War II. After returning from the war, his father realized, "Life is short."

Eventually, he got a job with the boat builder Pearson and, according to Potter, "was instrumental in the effort to create the Triton

fiberglass boat, which was the hit of the 1959 boating world.

Like father, like son – following a dream to success.

"My life," Potter said, "has been very satisfying."

Andrew Potter will perform his multimedia show, "The Road to High Street" at the Jamestown Recreation Center this Saturday, Oct. 17, from 7 to 9 p.m. The show is part of Pajamarama, a benefit for Bridges Inc., a local human services agency that supports individuals with developmental disabilities. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for children and can be purchased at the Bridges' office at 11 Clinton Ave. or at Baker's Pharmacy.

Potter's short video, "Stories from the Beavertail Light," can be found at [www.jamestownpress.com](http://www.jamestownpress.com).

## Jamestown Yacht Club fall series race results

Race number 5 of the Jamestown Yacht Club fall series was held on Oct. 4. The results were:

- A Class: 1. Baby Bella, Melges 24, Mark Nannini; 2. Floating Point, Frers 40, Pat Clayton.
- B Class: 1. Lynx, J/29, Dennis Nixon; 2. Luna, Albin Nova, Chris Brown & Samira Hakki; 3. Aurora, Tartan 41, A. Kallfelz.
- C Class: 1. Blues eRacer, J/22, Louis Mariorenzi; 2. Spirit, MX-20, EC Helme; 3. Good News, J/22, R. Miniutti/Senior; 4. Fast Lane, J/24, Harry & Ann Lane; 5. Conundrum, J/22, William & Alice Porter; 6. Wharf Rat, J/22, Matt Dunbar.
- D Class: 1. Summer Wind, Scampi 30, Tripp Alyn; 2. Second Wind, Seid 30T, Stephen Parfet; 3. Four Suns, Swan, Charles Beal; 4. Duck Soup, C&C 37/40, B. Clavin; 6. Footloose, Pearson Flyer 30, Andrew Yates.

*The mission of the Jamestown Philomenian Library is to anticipate the needs of our Island community and provide, for people of all ages, relevant and appropriate library materials, services and centers for meeting and learning. The Library seeks to educate, inform, entertain and enlighten through both traditional and new technologies.*



## Annual Report to the Trustees of the Jamestown Library

July 2008 to June 2009

### SERVICES:

- We were open 2,786 service hours during the year.
- We had approximately 52,934 visits from the public.
- We logged 1,393 reference transactions.
- We held 50 adult programs for 1,448 participants.
- We had 147 pre-school programs for 1,425 participants.
- We held 23 school-age programs for 686 participants.
- We had 13 Young Adult programs with 29 participants.
- We held 38 family programs with 536 participants.
- We have nine staff Internet terminals, 20 public Internet terminals. Public computers are accessed approximately 298 times per week.
- We provide on-line databases including the downloadable audio-files, e-mail notification of the New York Times best seller lists are a few of the new services we have added in the last few years.

### CIRCULATION:

- Total – 65,678
- Adult – 44,645
- Children – 18,275
- Young Adult – 2,758
- We sent out 18,554 items to the network so our total circulation including the network – an amazing 84,234
- We received 12,459 items from other libraries

(this number is included in the total circulation)  
 ■ Circulation is up 10% from the previous year.

Beyond our OSL statewide network, we requested 16 titles from libraries around the country and sent out two titles through the same country-wide network.

### LONG RANGE PLAN:

- The non-fiction collection is being vigorously weeded thanks to the help of a volunteer.
- We had to change vendors for our magazines and in the process, reviewed our magazine holdings.
- We instituted regular Friday morning story times and an outreach story time to the Early Learning Center. Although short staffed for more than six months in Children's Services, we increased participation in story times with the help of support staff.
- In January 2009, we submitted our LORI certification for the next three years.
- The Trustees are writing a strategic plan and in conjunction with them, the library staff is reviewing our three-year long range plan in anticipation of writing a new plan for January 2010.
- Community use of the meeting rooms has increased 40%.

### INCOME:

- \$341,706 Municipal income
- \$70,379 State Grant-in-Aid

- \$13,457 in donations in the 355 account. This includes book sale donations and printer money which is then used to buy supplies for the printers. The money is held by the town and rolled over from year to year for use by the library.
- \$9,195 in grants from Champlin Foundations through Ocean State Libraries.
- \$57,979 from the State of Rhode Island (income yearly until 2013. (This appropriation services the debt on the building.)
- A \$36,500 Champlin Grant for window repair.

### EXPENDITURES:

- \$245,630 – salaries and benefits from Municipal funds.
- \$20,991 – regular salaries from State Grant-in-Aid.
- \$9,783 – salaries for Sunday hours from the State Grant-in-Aid.
- \$22,452 – Ocean State Libraries fee.
- \$13,062 from donations in the 355 account.
- \$27,979 on print materials (includes subscriptions).
- \$7,298 on electronic data bases and computer enhancements.
- \$7,732 on AV material from donations.
- \$7,160 from the Trustees checking account for landscaping and electrical upgrades
- \$9,932 on programs by the Friends of the Jamestown Philomenian Library.
- \$73,639 – on the physical plant.

This report is based on statistics provided to the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Service for the fiscal year July 2008 to June 2009. Surveys for the Library's next Three-Year Long-Range Plan are available in the library or on-line through the Library's web page.

*This advertisement is paid for by the library Trustees with funds from the Jamestown Philomenian Library Endowment Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation.*