

Weekend Pass | entertainment

BACK ON THE BENTZEN BALL

If you see an unusually long line of awkward-looking people gliding around D.C. on Segways this weekend, the situation may be even funnier than it looks. The Bentzen Ball — the Tig Notaro-curated comedy festival organized by Washington website Brightest Young Things — is returning for its second run after a three-year hiatus. And just like at the 2009 edition of the laugh fest, Notaro has again organized a Segway tour for the comics. “It was ridiculous fun,” Notaro says of the first outing. “Nonstop laughter and a little bit of danger.” More than 30 performers — including Notaro, Wyatt Cenac, Sara Schaefer, “The Office’s” Kate Flannery and NPR’s Ira Glass — will stage stand-up, improv and musical comedy shows at five D.C. venues this weekend. Here’s a guide to the laughs. RUDI GREENBERG (EXPRESS)



GARFUNKEL & OATES

@garfunkeloates

Kate Micucci, above left, @katemicucci and Riki Lindhome, @rikilindhome

WHAT? The female answer to Flight of the Conchords, Garfunkel and Oates (actresses Micucci and Lindhome) write and perform silly, occasionally dirty folk songs with titles like “Pregnant Women are Smug,” “This Party Took a Turn for the Douche” and “My Apartment’s Very Clean Without You.”

WHO? You may know Lindhome from supporting roles in “Gilmore Girls,” Joss Whedon’s “Much Ado About Nothing” and this week’s “New Girl.” Micucci has appeared on “Raising Hope” and “The Big Bang Theory.”

SONGLYRIC: “Pregnant women are smug/ Everyone knows it, nobody says it/ Because they’re pregnant/ This zen world you’re enjoying/ Makes you really annoying.”

SEE MORE: IFC just ordered 10 episodes of “Garfunkel and Oates,” a scripted series due to debut in 2014.

The duo performs at Sphinx Club on Friday at 10 p.m., \$20-\$25, and at Lincoln Theatre on Saturday at 9:30 p.m. for the musical revue, \$25.



TIG NOTARO

Tig Notaro would have brought the Bentzen Ball back sooner, but life got in the way. Notaro was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012 “and my life just fell apart drastically,” she says.

Then, she released a comedy album, “Live,” addressing her illness, and her fame skyrocketed. Her cancer is in remission now, and while she’s busier than ever — with her podcast, “Professor Blastoff,” a memoir and two different documentaries in the works — she wanted to bring back the event she fondly calls “comedy camp, because it was really a magical weekend.”

Unlike other festivals, where comedians might see one another only during shows, Notaro wanted to make the Bentzen Ball feel like a vacation for the performers.

“We’ve scheduled activities for the comedians to do from the time they get up until they go to sleep so they can enjoy the city together,” she says.

The camaraderie also encourages collaborations between comics.

“Comedians will be popping up at other shows,” she says. “I think it’s definitely safe to say you’ll see me pop up at other shows.”

Notaro headlines opening night at 9:30 Club, Thu. at 7 p.m., \$35, and is roving all over.



MOSHE KASHER

@moshekasher

WHO? He opened for Aziz Ansari at Constitution Hall in March, co-hosts the podcast “The Champs” with Neal Brennan, is a regular panelist on “Chelsea Lately” and has a memoir — “Kasher in the Rye” — that’s equal parts hilarious and heartbreaking.

DID YOU KNOW? Both of Kasher’s parents are deaf. Also, as he details in his memoir, he was addicted to drugs, committed crimes and was committed to a mental hospital all before his Sweet 16.

TWEET: “To me, love is a bunch of people wishing me a happy birthday based on an automated reminder from Facebook.”

MORE: Stream Kasher’s Netflix stand-up special, “Live in Oakland,” then see him do a completely different batch of material in D.C.

Kasher does stand-up at Sphinx Club on Friday at 10 p.m., \$20-\$25, and Lincoln Theatre on Saturday at 6 p.m., \$20.

NICK KROLL

@nickkroll

WHO? He has his character-heavy sketch series “Kroll Show,” he recently roasted James Franco and he co-stars as the obnoxious, scheming Rodney Ruxin on the “The League.” Bonus: Kroll was once a local; he graduated from Georgetown University.

HE WAS IN THAT? Remember “Cavemen,” the sitcom idea that made ABC say, “If it’s good enough for a Geico



ad, it’s good enough for the fall lineup?” Kroll starred as one of the cavemen, even appearing in full costume on “The View” to promote it.

TWEET: “I think ‘The Most Interesting Man in the World’ is also likely ‘The Worst Father in the World.’”

SEE MORE: Season 5 of “The League” airs Wednesdays at 10:30 p.m. on FXX. Comedy Central has renewed “Kroll Show” for a second season; its return date is TBA.

Kroll headlines the Lincoln Theatre stand-up show Saturday at 6 p.m., \$20.

RUTH WYATT

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Saturday at 5 p.m., aggressive Los Angeles-based comic Brody Stevens is hosting a happy-hour comedy show at The Howard Theatre starring local comics. (The show is free to anyone with a Bentzen Ball ticket stub, \$5 otherwise.) One of the hallmarks of the festival is its focus on D.C. comedians, who are part of nearly every show around town. "It's good to expose the locals," says Notaro, who handpicked the festival lineup. Here are a few of Bentzen's funniest D.C.-area dwellers:

**Brandon Wardell**

Twitter: @brandonwardell

KNOWN FOR: His boyish looks, an unhealthy Drake obsession and absurd one-liners.

SAMPLE JOKE: "I go to [Virginia Commonwealth University] and

somebody outside of my school, they spray-painted this thing that said 'No gay zone' on the side of a building, which was really weird for my friend: Eddie Gayzone."

WHERE: U Street Music Hall; Fri., 7 p.m., \$15; the Virginian will celebrate his 21st birthday alongside out-of-town comics Stevens, Graham Elwood and Rob Cantrell.

**Elahe Izadi**

Twitter: @Elahelzadi

WHO: At her day job, Izadi covers politics for National Journal. By night, she slings zingers.

SAMPLE JOKE: Izadi, who is of Iranian descent, sets up this bit by saying that people often

misidentify her race: "I think inaccurate racism is the only time someone would yell a racial slur and then immediately take it back. Like, 'Oh, my mistake. I'll get you yet, Ethnically Ambiguous Girl!'"

WHERE: Lincoln Theatre; Sat., 9:30 p.m., \$25; she'll host the Music Revue.

**Sara Armour**

Twitter: @SaraArmour

KNOWN FOR: Dirty, awkward confessions, wearing braces and being a regular at local LYGO (Laugh Your Grits Off) showcases.

SAMPLE JOKE: To a former boyfriend, after he accused her of cheating: "Oh my god, you think I am pretty enough to cheat on you? That's the sweetest thing you've said."

WHERE: Howard Theatre; Sat., 5 p.m., free-\$5.

RACHEL
DRATCH

Twitter: @TheRealDratch

WHO: One of the most reliable performers in the history of "Saturday Night Live" (as Denise from Boston, Abe Scheinwald, Debbie Downer and so on), Dratch was on "30 Rock" often and is an ace improviser. She also just looks like someone who would be funny.

TWEET: "If Debbie Downer were still on 'SNL,' you can bet she'd be talking about drug-resistant gonorrhea."

MORE: Dratch's 2012 memoir, "Girl Walks into a Bar ..." is worth it for the "SNL" anecdotes alone. Most recently, she voiced multiple characters on Seth Meyers' animated Hulu series "The Awesomes."

Dratch is the main attraction at the Bentzen Ball's Theme Park Improv show (Saturday, 7 p.m., at U Street Music Hall, \$15) which also features Michael Hitchcock and Janet Varney.

ALSO
JOKING

Wyatt Cenac

Megan Mullally
(half of Nancy & Beth)

&

Heather Lawless, Brandon Wetherbee, Michael J. Foody, Andy T. Wood, Andrew Bucket, Brooke Van Poppelen, Jena Friedman, Martha Kelly, Aaron Burrell, Jenn Tisdale, Seaton Smith, Adam Friedland, The Lampshades, Christylez Bacon, Jessica Makinson, Cole Stratton, Jamel Johnson, Stephanie Hasz, Mariya Alexander, Stavros Halkias, Dana Bell, Sean Joyce, Natalie McGill, Nick Mullen and surprise guests!

DOUG
BENSON

Despite the phonetic similarity, the Bentzen Ball is not held to fete "Super High Me" comedian Doug Benson. "Every time I tell people I'm doing the Bentzen Ball, they can't hear the spelling, so they think it's a ball in my honor," he says in an email. (FYI: The festival is named after a Danish man who supposedly laughed himself to death while watching the film "A Fish Called Wanda.")

Given Benson's tireless work ethic, though, comedy's No. 1 stoner might as well have his own festival. He even has an idea for one: "The Benson Ball would take place in an amusement park and I'd tell everybody jokes while they wait in line for the rides."

Benson is always on the road, he hosts four guest-heavy podcasts — including "Doug Loves Movies," the movie trivia show he'll stage in D.C. Friday, he releases a stand-up album every year and he just started a YouTube series, "Getting Doug With High." "Every guest is required to smoke [weed] on the show," he says. "Live, for the world, or a few thousand viewers, to see."

Like his podcasts, the Web show is another chance for Benson to hang out with his comedy friends — something he's looking forward to doing in D.C.

"I'd rather see my friends than the Lincoln Memorial," he says. "It's a swell memorial ... but I'm not gonna play chess on the steps like those 'X-Men' weirdos."

Benson does stand-up at 9:30 Club, Thu. at 7 p.m., \$25, and hosts "Doug Loves Movies" at Sphinx Club, Fri. at 7 p.m., \$20-\$25.

VENUES

The Bentzen Ball runs Thursday through Sunday at five locations around D.C. See

brightestyoungthings.com/bentzen-ball for a full lineup for each show, times, prices and ticket links.

9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW; 202-265-0930, 930.com. (U Street)

Howard Theatre, 620 T St. NW; 202-803-2899, thehowardtheatre.com. (Shaw-Howard U)

The Sphinx Club, 1315 K St. NW; 202-898-1688, sphinxclubdc.com. (Farragut North)

Lincoln Theatre, 1215 U St. NW; 202-328-6000, thelincolndc.com. (U Street)

U Street Music Hall, 1115 U St. NW; 202-588-1880, ustreetmusichall.com. (U Street)