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Sunday	December 13	1:00 pm	5:00 pm
Friday	December 18	2:00 pm	7:30 pm
Saturday	December 19	2:00 pm	7:30 pm
Sunday	December 20	1:00 pm	5:00 pm

*Preview Show, all seats \$32!



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She's All That

Paula Poundstone's sincerity keeps showing behind all the joke-cracking. See why she's a perennial favorite at Jonathan's in Ogunquit November 28.

INTERVIEW BY NINA LIVINGSTONE

I lost my sight ten years ago, and I also have a hearing loss. I guess you could say I am a "deaf blind journalist." How would you describe yourself to me?

Yeah, and let's see, what else... I have blue eyes that are usually red now, because I have glaucoma and I take those stupid drops.

You have glaucoma?

I do, and the drops make your eyes red. And I'm in the midst of a bunch of eye stuff now.

I have kind of high cheek bones; my head's sort of squaring out over the years. I'm about five seven, but I have terrible posture, so I look shorter.

When did you first feel you had it in yourself to become a comedian, and that you had a gift of humor?

You know, I'm not sure there's such a thing as talent, exactly. In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell dispels the myth of talent, and I really agree with him. If you get to be good at something, it's because you love it. It's not just practice, it's a particular attitude, also access and opportunity. He says it takes 10,000 hours of practice to be an expert at something. I don't know if I have 10,000 hours on stage—I would doubt it, because I'm not putting in eight hours a day on the stage, or 10 or whatever, so I don't know if I've practiced enough in

that regard. I was lucky enough to be living in Boston in 1977 when the stand-up comedy renaissance took place. The scene started up, and I kind of jumped in and joined up with that. There were places to go work; there weren't a lot of us performing at that time.

Whatever it is, did it come to you naturally?

I've always loved making people laugh. In May of 1965, my kindergarten teacher said, "I have enjoyed many of Paula's humorous comments about our activities." So at least in

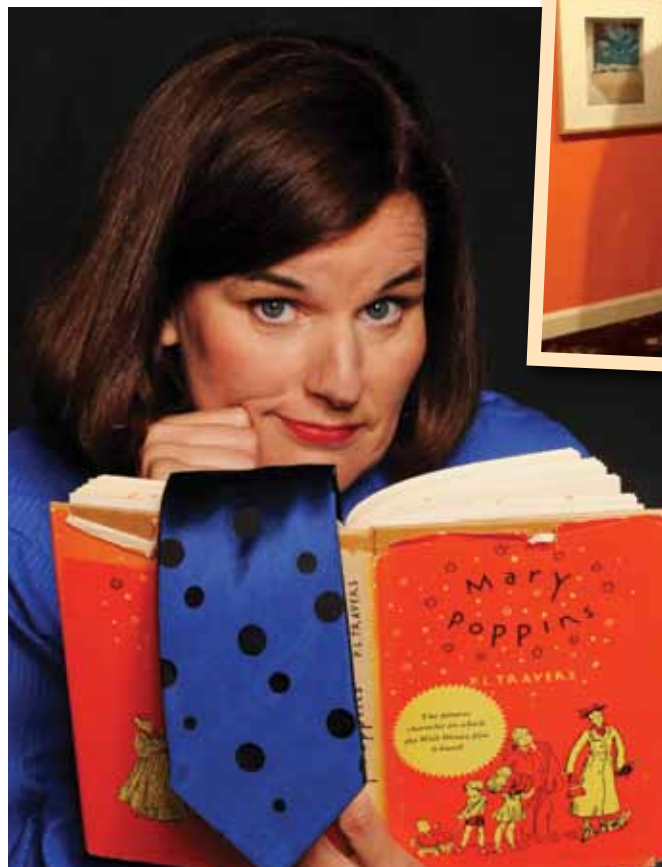


Mrs. Bump's eyes I was what I aspired to very early on.

Did you have a lot of support after that?
Not exactly. I started when I was 19, and people used to say to me, "Well, what do your parents think? Do your parents like it that you're a stand-up comic?" And I used to say, "I have no idea—I didn't ask them."

Where do you feel you found your strength and your courage to be up there?

Well, the great thing about stand-





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up comedy is, it's an endorphin producer, both for the audience and the performer. So you literally get a chemical boost from doing it. It's something I thought I'd like, and boy, once I did it, once you taste that elixir, it's hard to go back. I'm a stand-up comic through and through.

When you're in New England, where's your secret place?

Some of the family I lived with when I was a teenager living in Manchester, Mass.

What's your connection with Maine and Jonathan's?

I did Jonathan's for the first time, gee, like 10 years ago or something. The first time he picked me up at the airport, I fell in love with him the minute I met him. He's just a salt-of-the-earth maniac—a great guy, funny and practical. Jonathan's itself has been there for a very long time; it's a family-owned business. It has great food and a lovely atmosphere, a great venue. He mostly has music, and then occasionally he'll have somebody like myself. The thing is, Maine crowds are so much fun to work to; the combination of the two makes it one

Poundstone is a regular guest on NPR's hilarious news quiz show, "Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!"



of my favorite jobs I do all year. I always say when I work in Maine, I look out over a sea of gray hair sometimes, and it's not because they are any older than the people I work to in other venues in other states, but I think that people for the most part don't dye their hair. So there's something about them that's very real. And I don't dye mine often enough, so there's always a gray streak down the middle. I'm not fooling anybody.

After my shows, I come out and take pictures and hug people and talk and hang out. I don't do it every time, but I do

ALAIN MCCLAUGHLIN FOR NPR

PERFORMANCE

it at Jonathan's.

After all the experiences you've had over the past decade, tell us a highlight.

Well, this last year, I voiced a character—a “forgetter” named Paula—in the movie *Inside Out* from Pixar, because I love Pixar. They are a remarkably brilliant movie-making company. I got to work with Pete Doctor, who is a genius—he's a writer and director. It was pretty delightful.

Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

I am an atheist, a devout atheist. Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking if you're not Catholic or Christian or Jewish or a Muslim or whatever, your beliefs are not strong or important to you. I feel as strongly about atheism as somebody else might feel about Catholicism. I believe in you, I believe in us, and that alone. I don't need a God illusion to tell me it's important to take care of one another and to take care of the earth. I thought the Pope's visit was lovely—I don't have a bad thing to say about it—but I think it's a little embarrassing we need a Pope to come over from Italy to tell our Congress we're supposed to work together to take care of one another and take care of the earth. I assumed they knew that already. I mean, if they didn't, then that's an American tragedy.

What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?

I'd love at some point to do more comedy acting, but you know what, if I never did anything but what I do right now, I'd consider myself the luckiest performer in the entire world. I love my job—it's so much fun. Especially now, when I feel like the entire world is in a mental health crisis, it just feels really great to be a part of why people are having a good time. Certainly it's a good time for me.

What's your favorite season in New England?

Oh, my favorite has always been fall. It's a beautiful time of the year. It's comfortable, you know; you're not trying to get in or out of the heat or cold. Fall is really the beginning of the year. People say it's January first, but in truth, back-to-school season dominates the beginning of the year, even when you're not a student anymore. ■

Nina Livingstone is a Boston-based freelance writer and novelist.



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