



The
Sunset Beacon

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What a Clown! By Lauren D. Yee

Entertaining more than 60 squirming kindergartners for an hour is a daunting task for most people. Add some equally fretful parents and their strollers and you're faced with roughly the same circumstances that

David Magidson, alias Boswick Turnstyle, Jr., faces daily as a clown.



Even a roomful of energetic children and their parents at a June 21 performance at the Presidio Branch Library did not unnerve Ringling Brothers Circus veteran Magidson, who has entertained as a clown for more than 14 years. Magidson said he actually prefers his audiences to be energetic rather than silent.

According to fellow clown Terra Wilson, who performs under the name of Yoyo the Magic Clown, Magidson handles flocks of children with

ease.

"He works well with kids and also big crowds of kids," Wilson said.

Madeline, who was among the children from the Jewish Community Center at the Presidio Branch performance, said she enjoyed Magidson. "He was fun," she said. "I liked the tricks that were funny."

Since moving to the Inner Sunset District in 1988, Magidson frequently involves himself in the community through performances. Recently, he appeared at the Sunset Branch Library and several other libraries, which he cites as his favorite places to perform.

"Birthday parties are my bread and butter, but the libraries are my favorite shows," he said.

According to Magidson, his desire to be the center of a performance was the reason he quit Ringling Brothers to start his own clown troupe, the Kloons, in 1989.

"Ringling Brothers was like being in the middle of a fun party, but I have this desire to be the center of attention and get the eyeballs on me," Magidson said. "Creatively, it (Kloons) was way more challenging."

Along with other former Ringling Brothers clowns, Magidson toured with the Kloons throughout the country and Canada, stopping for shows at San Francisco's Asian American Theater Company and New Conservatory Theater.

Despite the creative fulfillment the Kloons' show "Kloons on Ice" brought to Magidson, in comparison to Ringling Brothers, they did not make much money.

"We broke even," he said.

So instead of additional touring, Magidson settled down in the Inner Sunset District and began raising his two sons, Duncan and Dusty, weaving his family life into his clowning career.

According to Magidson, his sons regard his job as no more bizarre than that of any other father.

"Seeing me as a clown is like someone seeing their dad go out in a suit and tie," he said.

As for his clown name, Boswick Turnstyle, Jr., Magidson said he first thought of the name in college when he "woke up out of a dream."

At the time, Magidson was studying at Boston's Emory College to be an actor, only to discover that acting did not excite him - but clowning around did. After college, he joined Ringling Brothers in 1987, where he learned the tricks of the clowning trade.

"Acting wasn't flipping my cookies," Magidson said. "At Ringling Brothers they were training us to work for the work. I learned 50 times as much as in acting school."

Despite his years of learning at Ringling Brothers and later with the Kloons, Magidson said he is still adding to his knowledge as a clown, which he claims requires a lot more than pratfalls and pies.

"Clowning has a lot to do with world knowledge because it gives me a real depth of character," he said. "Kids are unique, so you have to be very sharp and know how to react. It's made me more patient."

However, Magidson's audiences are not always receptive to him at first.

"Sometimes I go into Chinese daycare centers where they're very disciplined and I have to spend a lot more time teaching them how to be an audience," he said.

With younger audiences, Magidson said he does "more juggling because I don't need lots of audience participation," whereas doing magic tricks involves audience members.

Magidson added that the real trick to impressing an audience is not the tricks themselves, but how they are presented. Though a quarter of Magidson's shows are for adults, he said he uses the same material for both kids and grown-ups.

"I can do the same show, except I present it differently," he said. The only difference is he does not wear make-up for his adult shows.

"It is my dream job," he said. "I love this type of show."

As for the future, Magidson wants to wait until his sons grow up before he considers touring, though he dreams of expanding his audience.

"The future will just be bigger shows," he said. "I could see myself touring the county fair circuit where there's a thousand people watching you."

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