

## Comedy recalls memories of growing up Catholic

Playing Sister in *Late Nite Catechism* brings back a lot of memories for Jan Chimento. She spent plenty of time in the principal's office of a Catholic school while growing up. Now she finds humor in the situation, but back then it wasn't funny.



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

"I was suspended several times for talking back," said Chimento, a New Orleans resident who now gets paid for interacting with audiences in her one-woman show coming to the Costick Center in Farmington Hills on Saturday, Jan. 26.

Produced by Entertainment Events of New York City, *Late Nite Catechism* was written by Vicki Quade and Mari-pat Donovan in 1993 and debuted at the Live Bait Theatre in Chicago before moving to an Off-Broadway venue in 1999. Chimento began doing the comedy twice a week in September 2000 at Le Posti Theatre in New Orleans under the auspices of Donovan's company, Entertainment Events. Now Chimento flies around the country giving performances.

### Clean humor

"It's a fun show, very clean humor. If you're not Catholic you'll still love it," Chimento said. "It's set up as an adult catechism class and Sister's upset because there have been a lot of changes in the Catholic Church. The play compares Catholicism before Vatican II and now. Sister's been teaching religion for 30 years. It shows us the changes she's been through in 30 years and three popes."

"They turned the altar around so the priest could face the people. The Mass is in English now, not Latin, so we have a hoo-t-e-n-a-n-n-y. Whacking with a ruler is out because of lawsuits and not eating meat on Friday is a thing of the past."

As Chimento talked, my own memories came flooding back. The nuns at St. Gabriel's School in Southwest Detroit were much like Sister, stern but in a loving sort of way. Well, except for when Kevin, the class clown, began throwing spit balls. But for the rest of us who rarely saw their wrath, the nuns held no threat. Of course, it was kind of scary when they'd twirl their huge rosaries, which were attached to their waist, as they talked.

Stem disciplinarian: Jan Chimento plays the stern disciplinarian in the interactive comedy "Late Nite Catechism" at the Costick Center.

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**Late Nite Catechism**  
 What: An interactive comedy starring "Sister," a nun who takes the audience to task as she teaches an adult religion class.  
 When: 8:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 26  
 Where: Costick Center, 28600 West 11 Mile, Farmington Hills  
 Tickets: \$30, includes dinner catered by Gourmet Express. Call (248) 473-1800



## Storytellers share cultural lessons, explore history

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN  
 STAFF WRITER  
 lachomin@oe.homecomm.net

LaRon Williams believes that to "love one's own culture is not enough." People of all ethnic groups need to share their histories in order to appreciate the differences and similarities.

An African American, Williams relays the lessons of slavery and the Civil Rights struggle through tales about the perseverance of Africans originally brought to this country against their will and the generations that followed. In time, he hopes to promote understanding that will enable a united America to build a future on its strengths.

Too heavy a subject for children? Williams thinks not. It's all in the way a story is presented. With each turn of a page, books capture children's attention through pictures and color. Williams uses traditional African and American musical instruments, movement, language, and facial expressions to conjure up images that will hold the interest of children as well as adults.

On Saturday, Jan. 26, the Ann Arbor resident brings his one man show to the Storytelling Festival at Summit on the Park Community Center. Williams is one of three storytellers sharing multicultural tales

in afternoon and evening programs presented by Canton Project Arts.

"The stories are woven around a message of peaceful conflict resolution, collective problem solving," said Williams. "They're stories about Africans and African Americans rooted in folk tales. I hook the story up with the flow of history. The more we know that history the more we're able to understand our society today."

### Journey

Williams takes the listeners on a journey across America by a lyrical, down home-voice. A graduate of Eastern Michigan University, he taught preschool in Ann Arbor before becoming a professional storyteller 11 years ago.

"There were stories the children loved to hear over and over again," said Williams. "After reading them many times, I realized I hadn't even looked at the book. I knew it by heart."

Now Williams travels the Midwest telling stories woven around the African American experience.

"It's the same message for kids and adults," said Williams. "It's a very interactive, very energetic style geared to a 5- to 6-year old. Adults get bored with stories so I almost always use music. I play a variety of traditional instruments, djembe, an African drum, mbira, thumb piano and bones."

Yes, bones. Originally African Americans, and more than likely, Africans used the ribs from a cow or horse to create different rhythm patterns. Today, Williams uses bones manufactured from wood.

"Some people respond very much to

music," said Williams. "Music helps to enhance the story, children especially like a story accompanied by music."

"I try to set them in a historical context to understand ourselves and society. We live in a society which has its underpinnings in racial inequality from the extermination of the original people who lived here to the exploitation of Chinese and African. We have to start to share our stories, common person stories, Chinese workers who built the railroads."

Corinne Stavish strives to educate children and adults about different cultures and their histories as artistic coordinator of the Canton Storytelling Festival. For the fourth annual event she invited Anne Shimojima, a Japanese American who specializes in Asian tales. A school librarian for 26 years, Shimojima gives workshops on the use of storytelling in the classroom.

Mary-Eileen McCleary brings tales from her audio cassette, *Oh Canada! Strange but True Stories of Early*

Canada. McCleary founded the Second Story Workshop in a renovated barn in Baden, Ontario. It is a warm and welcoming venue for not only storytelling but workshops on the art.

### Diverse programming

"I'm excited about the diversity in programming this year. There's different cultures represented from Anne Shimojima to Mary-Eileen McCleary who specializes in true unbelievable tales of Canada, wonderful, spellbinding stories. There are three ethnic groups we've not had represented in the festival in its first three years," said Stavish, a storyteller who focuses on Jewish folklore with a Russian flavor.

"My favorite tellers make me feel first and then think. As with all stories I respond to them with my heart. What I love about Ron is he's a warm and personable man. I've gained an appreciation for his culture. Mary-Eileen is Stratford Festival storyteller-in-residence. Each year she tells stories relating to the plays."

"The afternoon sessions are for children age 4 and up. There are great stories for kids that involve them and in the evening for adults."

According to Stavish, storytelling began as an adult medium.

"Storytelling is the first form of theater," said Stavish who teaches a class in drama history at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield. "I'm encouraging my students to go to the festival in the evening to hear theater as scholars believe it originated with one actor doing all the parts."

"All benefit from storytelling. It's uplifting and such an exciting way for families to share an art form. At performances, I've watched families turn to one another and giggle."



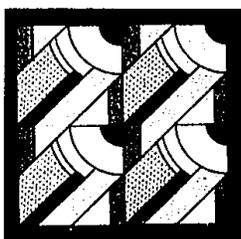
LaRon Williams



Anne Shimojima

## EXHIBIT

**Modular painting:**  
 This oil and magna on canvas by Roy Lichtenstein is one of 46 works recently donated to Cranbrook Art Academy by Dr. John and Mrs. Rose M. Shuey of Detroit. The contemporary collection continues on exhibit through April 7.



## Cranbrook shows major contemporary art collection

BY NICOLE STAFFORD  
 STAFF WRITER  
 nstafford@oe.homecomm.net

Geometric color seems to rush through space inside the gallery at the Cranbrook Art Museum as if in a single moment, catharsis has struck a group of artists armed with brushes loaded with fluorescent and brilliantly tinted paint.

Director of the Bloomfield Hills museum Gre-

gory Wittkopp and staff, along with a crew of Cranbrook Academy of Art graduate students, are in the midst of installing a collection of 46 contemporary works of art from a period spanning the mid-'60s to mid-'80s.

Recently donated to the institution by Rose M. Shuey of Detroit, the collection includes pieces by some of the most important artists of

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What: *Three Decades of Contemporary Art: The Dr. John and Mrs. Rose M. Shuey Collection*, 46 major contemporary art works, including pieces by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg and Bridget Riley

When: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, (until 9 p.m.) on Friday, through Sunday, April 7

Where: Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., on the Cranbrook Educational Community campus in Bloomfield Hills

Tickets: Admission is \$5 adults; \$3 children age 6-17, seniors and full-time students. No charge for children under age 5 and members, call (877) 462-7252 or visit www.cranbrook.edu