

May 18 2008

COFFEE WITH: Take my wife... please

By Dan Ferguson

On his wedding day, Darcy Michael changed careers.

He'd been working about three years as an interior designer in Vancouver, and while the business was doing well, he was finding it harder and harder to maintain interest.

It was time to try something else, but he wasn't sure just what.

As the youngest of three kids growing up on the North Shore, he'd always been funny, the classic class clown.

When he grew up, he experimented with on-stage comedy, even spending a brief time with the Second City stage revue in Toronto.

But he'd never seriously considered stand-up until it was his turn to speak at his own wedding ceremony.

His off-the-cuff remarks turned into an affectionate comic riff about his Dad attending his son's wedding to another man.

"I just had fun with it."

It went over well.

His father and all the other 125 guests were laughing heartily.

Darcy says he honestly did not realize the possibilities until his spouse turned to him as they left the hall and said, "you know what you have to do."

When the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon, Darcy started building his act, developing material a few minutes at a time.

Audiences were laughing at his "stoner" character bits, but they were having trouble when he talked about being a gay man at the start of a show.

People just didn't believe him.

As a burly, bearded man who prowls the stage in a backwards baseball cap, sweats and runners, he didn't fit any of the starved-to-perfection Will-and-Grace sitcom stereotypes.

So he made it part of his act.

After about 10 to 15 minutes of cheerfully profane material, he then starts talking about his marriage.

He doesn't mention his partner is a man until he makes what seems to be a fairly conventional crack about how the passion has faded after several years of marriage.

Then he says, "my wife, Jeremy, hates that joke."

There is usually momentary confusion, then laughter.

"Surprise," he will say. "We're everywhere."

Audiences love it.

He's moving up, doing bigger shows and gaining a higher profile, with televised appearances on both the CBC and CTV networks set for next year, and his first appearance this year at the famous Just For Laughs comedy festival in Montreal.

There, he's hoping he can meet Ron White, the grumpy country-music stand-up comic from the Blue Collar Comedy shows who is one of Michael's favourite comedians.

Darcy has his own website (currently being overhauled), and samples of his act can be viewed on YouTube (note: most of it is adult-oriented material).

After living in Vancouver's West End for a while, Darcy and Jeremy moved to Delta a few years ago for the peace and quiet.

"I love it," he says.

As he becomes better known, won't it become harder to surprise audiences about being gay?

"Then I can just continue telling jokes."

He sounds like he's looking forward to it.



COLLEEN FLANAGAN THE LEADER

Darcy Michael's wedding was the springboard for his burgeoning stand-up comedy career.

Darcy Michael will be appearing at Yuk Yuk's in Vancouver from June 5-7.

defferguson@surreyleader.com