

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EVENT: We've Got Your Back
WHO: Baltimore Improv Group
WHEN: Saturday, January 26, 2019
WHERE: 1727 N. Charles St, Baltimore, MD
COST: FREE



Baltimore Improv Group Takes A Mental Health Day

Baltimore comedy performers and local storytellers reveal how laughter heals in free show *We've Got Your Back*

BALTIMORE, MD – Baltimore Improv Group (BIG) presents *We've Got Your Back*, a free comedy show in their Station North theater that has a special focus on mental health awareness.

An invited guest will share personal true stories about depression, anxiety, mental health, and sadness. BIG produces comedy shows every night of the week with some events aiming to emphasize a special compelling and relevant theme. In *We've Got Your Back*, performers use empathy, truth, and emotional intelligence to see if laughter is the best medicine. BIG's improv comedy team listens for the first time right along with the audience. They instantly create comedy scenes, dialogue, and characters inspired by the tales.

Jessica Henkin, the show's creator, performs improv weekly at BIG. Since 2006, she has also co-produced popular Baltimore-based live show and podcast *The Stoop Storytelling Series*.

"I personally love this show and am so grateful for the opportunity to produce it at BIG. Storytelling is a passion of mine obviously, as is improv, so I get the pleasure of combining my two artistic loves." said Henkin.

Founder of The Ed Lally Foundation which promotes mental health awareness, Jordan Lally has helped BIG facilitate improv workshops focused on mindfulness and self-care. Lally explains that art remains important in building a sense of community around mental health awareness.

"There is a tremendous healing power in artistic expression, both for the artist and the community consuming the art," said Lally. "A sense of isolation helps to fuel depression and anxiety. The expression of that experience - be it in a song, painting or improv show - sheds light on the darkness, creating connection where once there was division."

A former Radio City Rockette who earned an MA in Counseling from NYU, Jennifer Withers now serves as BIG's Artistic Director. Withers explains that storytelling and comedy help the audience find comfort in how everyone sometimes feels uncomfortable.

"Before every show, improvisers have a tradition of tapping one another on the back to say, 'I've got your back,' We're making the comedy up as we go, and that can be both exciting and daunting", said Withers.

"It is a moment to remind one another that, no matter what happens on stage, we're in it together and we're there for each other. I love that this show extends that sentiment out to our guests and audience." Henkin notes that the guest speaker and improvisors rely on building trust with each other.

"It's also always heartwarming to watch the storyteller's face light up with recognition, then laughter, as they see their pathos being tossed around gently like a beach ball amongst the improvisers that evening," Henkin said. "Just a reminder to not take life too seriously, even when you're in the shit."

We've Got Your Back is Saturday Jan., 26 at 8 p.m. at The BIG Theater, 1727 N. Charles St. For more information and tickets go to bigimprov.org/gotyourback

ABOUT BALTIMORE IMPROV GROUP

Baltimore Improv Group (BIG) serves as the city's leading non-profit improv comedy venue. BIG began in 2004 and now entertains with over 120 shows each year. With an annual audience of over 5,000 people, over 100 regular performers present audiences with shows every night of the week. As part of Young Audiences of Maryland (YAMD), BIG performs in assemblies and teaching residencies in Maryland schools.

The BIG Theater opened in October 2017 in Station North. The theater offers 3,000 square feet of space for shows; classes and workshops for adults, kids and teens; a podcast studio; and a lobby connecting actors, comedy performers, and audiences. BIG shows include improv comedy, stand-up, sketch, and more.

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Related Links: bigimprov.org

SOURCE: Baltimore Improv Group

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