

Just for Laughs: Meet the auditioning comics

Standups come from all walks of life

BY BILL BROWNSTEIN, THE GAZETTE FEBRUARY 14, 2014



Scott Andrew Carter comes from Kelowna, B.C., “where all this country’s great comedians have come out of.”

Photograph by: Dario Ayala, The Gazette

MONTREAL — Meet the 11 standups who took the Comedyworks stage at the recent Just for Laughs audition.

Scott Andrew Carter: Comes from Kelowna, B.C., “where all this country’s great comedians have come out of.” Looks “kind of like Charles Manson — which doesn’t help.” Ran a landscaping company in a past life. Made the move to Montreal and to comedy 2½ years ago, “which is quite the stretch from landscaping.” First Just for Laughs audition. “I just hope this gets me more spots. Actually, I just hope to get paid every now and again, so I can eat every now and again.” Not to be confused with CJAD morning man Andrew Carter, “who doesn’t look like Charles Manson.”

Guido Cocomello: Has been doing comedy for five years, and has let loose in clubs across Canada.

Recently took his one-man show to Rome. His chief vocation is acting. Has performed in five Centaur Theatre productions, most recently The St. Leonard Chronicles. Playwright Vittorio Rossi is his mentor. Has done several movies, including A Dennis the Menace Christmas. Goal is to get into Just for Laughs and headline at clubs everywhere. “Nothing can replace the thrill of doing standup with just me and a microphone. When I kill on stage, it feels like I’ve gone to the moon.”

Kate Conner: A Minnesota expat who “moved to Montreal just in time for the Ice Storm.” Standup, writer, entrepreneur, “cult survivor, political junkie, hobby proctologist, loving mom and devoted wife ... well, maybe not loving mom. I have four kids, three of whom I love very much.” Started doing comedy 2½ years ago. “I hope to be an inspiration to other stay-at-home moms who are on the verge of suicide.” First Just for Laughs audition: “I feel more ready than I was last year.” Has her own YouTube channel. Material includes parenting advice and sex-positive material about marriage.

Eman: After a serious car crash in 2006, she drove into a career in standup. Has done festivals from Just for Laughs to Amman Stand-Up Comedy. Just may have the distinction of being the first comic to headline at a club while slinging cocktails at said club: Comedyworks, which was the first stop on her Eman Unveiled Canadian tour. “The idea came to me after a club owner laughed in my face when I suggested headlining his club. He said: ‘It’s not like you think you can tour the country with your act, do you?’ What brings a person more joy than proving others wrong?”

Heidi Foss: Veteran actor, comedian, screenwriter. Has won the Canadian Comedy Award for writing on This Hour Has 22 Minutes and was nominated as funniest female in Canada. Had her own Comedy Now! special on the Comedy Network/CTV. Has done Just for Laughs numerous times, including three televised galas. Going for her fourth, “so I’m down to really only one joke that I can do that hasn’t already been televised.” Why this audition matters: “Just for Laughs is the biggest comedy festival in the world, with industry from L.A. coming up for a couple of weeks, giving you the chance to meet future agents and employers.”

David Heti: Hails from Toronto; has lived in New York. Has been doing comedy for seven years. Broke his parents’ hearts by opting out of a lucrative law career for the joys of comedy. Veers toward the dark side: “Some of my jokes are problematic.” Last auditioned for Just for Laughs in 2009. “I’m hoping this can change my life. Then again, I’m hoping that anything can change my life at this point.” Recorded a DVD on New Year’s Day: “It’s as yet untitled, but the plan is to title it before it comes out in the next few weeks.”

Massimo: Started doing comedy 14 years ago. Has done Just for Laughs three times. Has played clubs, colleges and theatres across Canada and the U.K. Was a finalist in Yuk Yuk’s Great Canadian Laugh-Off. Has taken up acting. Did a memorable turn as Big Jule in Guys and Dolls at Segal Centre. Will soon be seen in X-Men: Days of Future Past. “Hugh Jackman, the Wolverine, kicked my ass. That was fun.” And no, Massimo isn’t a stage name taken out of deep-seated admiration for Cher or

Madonna: “The sad reality is my family was just too poor to give me a last name.”

Morgan O’Shea: Hails from Calgary. Had a friend who urged him to come here because “Montreal is the capital of comedy in Canada, and because it’s definitely not Calgary. It was only after I got here that I learned that the comedy capital was actually Toronto.” Regardless, has been living in Montreal and doing comedy for the last six years, “just grinding it out.” Second Just for Laughs audition. “I didn’t actually get the audition because of my comedy — I got in on my looks.” Wants to make it into the festival “because there’s no alternative in life for me at this point.”

David Pryde: Started comedy as an alternative to journalism while studying the latter in Halifax: “I prefer making stuff up.” Came back to Montreal to pursue comedy. Got married and had kids, which revitalized his career: “Now I benefit from their future therapy as they provide me endless amounts of material.” Won the Just for Laughs Homegrown Comic Competition in 1999, and has since done the festival 10 times, including four galas. If he doesn’t get ahead, he could go back to journalism: “I’m now learning there’s lots of room for embellishment in journalism.”

Jess Salomon: Worked as a war-crimes lawyer for the United Nations, “but I decided I needed to get serious.” No joke: she was part of the prosecuting team in The Hague with the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Earned her law degree at McGill, then worked at the Department of Justice in Ottawa before being hired for the UN job. Gave it all up for comedy four years ago. “Yeah, it’s like that old joke: Prosecuting war criminals is easy, comedy is hard.” Hopes to land Just for Laughs spot “to justify the career switch, but it’s too late to turn back now.”

Franco Taddeo: Veteran on Montreal comedy scene. Has headlined at Comedy Nest and Comedyworks, as well as at clubs across Canada and the U.S. Among the most well-read of comedians, thanks to his other gig as librarian at McGill, “which also provides me, my wife and three sons with health care.” Also has a home in Florida, so he must be doing something right. Has been doing comedy for six years. Has done Boston and Winnipeg comedy fests. This is his third Just for Laughs audition, but he has yet to do the festival: “My career is going great, but this would be a feather in my cap.”

bbrownstein@montrealgazette.com

Twitter: [billbrownstein](#)

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)



Scott Andrew Carter comes from Kelowna, B.C., "where all this country's great comedians have come out of."

Photograph by: Dario Ayala, The Gazette

