

Performing Arts Profile: Rich Stimac lives 'In the Land of Cleve'

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51-year-old **Rich Stimac** is an Actor / Writer / Director / Producer who gets his creative side from his grandmother.

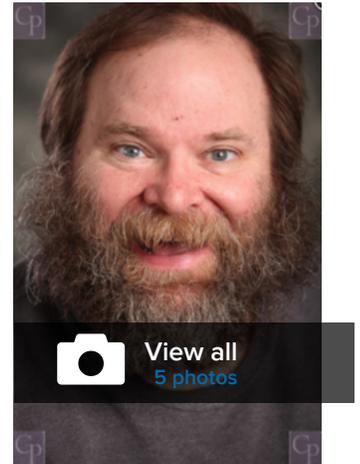


Photo provided by Rich Stimac



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"My grandmother was a big proponent of art and music... my mom was always making people laugh, and my dad always thinks he's funny, so I get my comedic side from them. But I do think I am the first person in the family to pursue an acting and writing career," says Stimac.

His career is long and varied. In kindergarten he did a skit based on the alphabet. "I was "V is for Vegetable" -- I even had a carrot as a prop," he muses.

With roles ranging from Santa and Father Time in middle school, he made his way to musicals at Holy Name High School and then to plays at Cleveland State University. He discovered his love for comedy studying improv at Second City in Chicago, and he's also worked in Hollywood and in New York.

"I must say that acting is my first love. I have always been drawn to the idea of performing in front of an audience and making people happy. I have performed around the country and am now lucky enough to focus on my acting career full-time," he says.

"My favorite roles to date have been Pseudolus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Fredrik in *A Little Night Music*, and Edna in *Hairspray*. My next goal is to create new characters such as an overweight superhero named "Bellyman" and an old-time explorer called "Steampunk Pete" at my own Land of Cleve Theatre," he says.

But Stimac admits that he falls short in the realm of playing an instrument.

“This has been the bane of my existence since I was a young child. I wrote my first song in eighth grade, entitled "First Day of Spring," while I was walking home from school. Since then, I have written over 200 songs. But because I do not play an instrument, I have never been able to perform these original tunes for others. I am currently seeking a Cleveland-based guitarist or keyboardist who might be interested in collaborating together, so I can finally have my songs heard,” he laments.

Writing reviews and profiling the performance institutions of Cleveland has been a bit more successful for him, as he’s known for his pieces on www.LandofCleve.net.

“Land of Cleve actually started as a sitcom for Tim Conway that I wrote back in the 1980s. Tim is from Chagrin Falls and was interested in the project, but for some reason the show never got produced. When I moved back to Northeast Ohio in 2013, I was looking for some way to get involved in the burgeoning arts community. That’s when I hit upon the idea to write an arts and entertainment blog called LandOfCleve.net. I post reviews, interviews, and promo pieces for local plays and films, as well as spotlights on established artists I have worked with in the industry. We recently reached over 300,000 visitor to the site, which is now averaging over 1,000 views a day. If anyone wants to be featured on the site, they can email us at inthelandofcleve@gmail.com,” Stimac says.

But Stimac is still a busy actor. He notes that in the past year he’s “gone from performing in the holiday show at Tower City to a dramatic role at Karamu House, and a children’s show for Brecksville Theatre on the Square.”

On top of all of that, this Parma resident is planning on starting his own theatre company this year in the Old Brooklyn area. People who’d like to get involved and get more info can email Stimac at inthelandofcleve@gmail.com.

In the meantime, read up on his work at www.LandofCleve.net.

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(edit - 09/09/15 "my mom was also..." was changed to read "my mom was always"

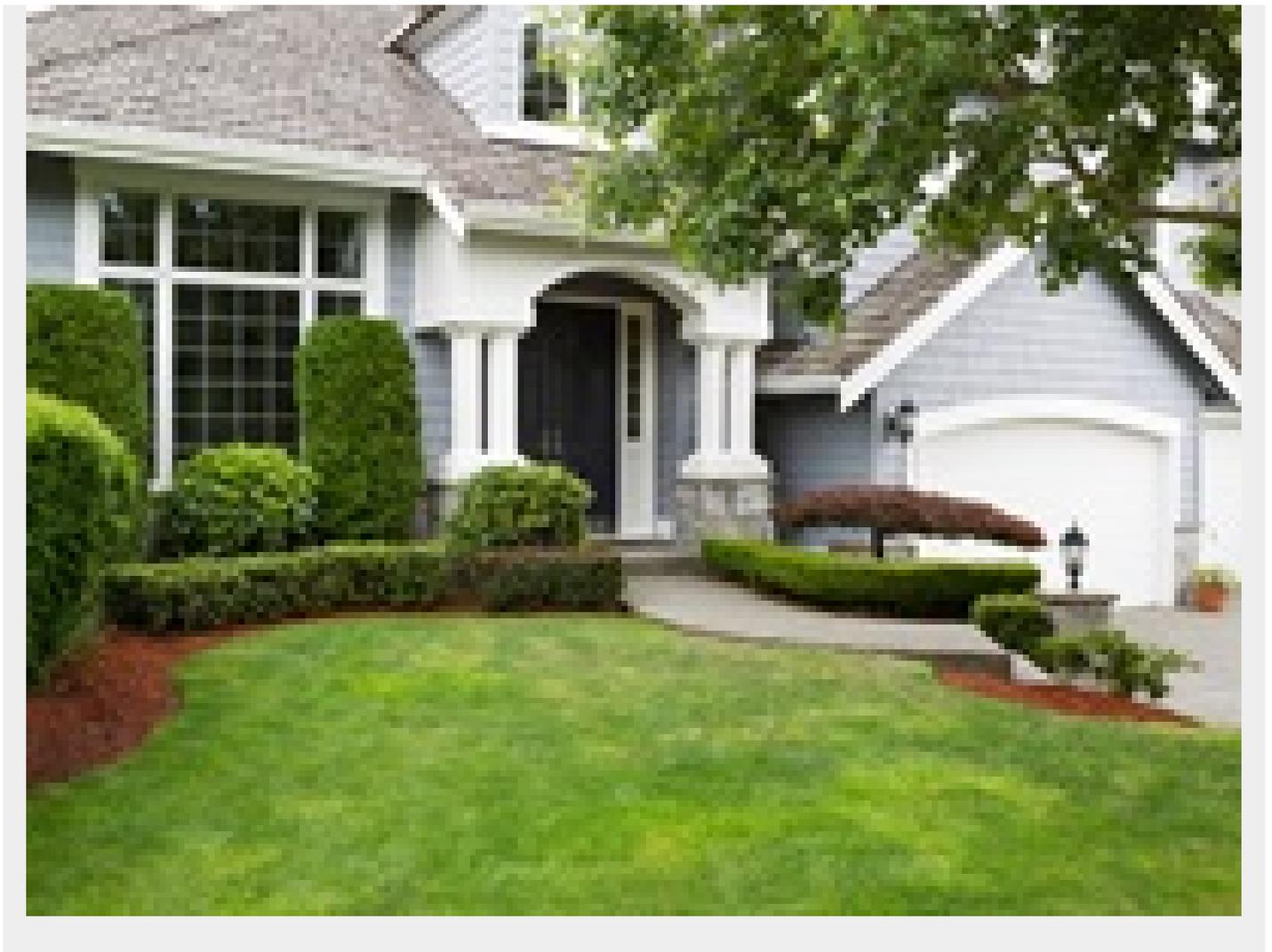
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Kate Klotzbach
Cleveland Performing Arts Examiner

