CHEVY CHASE comedians bring down the house

Curt Shackelford of Friendship Boulevard produced last weekend’s “Laugh Riot at the Hyatt,” a showcase of area comics who are charged with humoring their neighbors and visitors.

Comics try out during the week; if they do well, they’re invited to a trial run on Saturday at the Hyatt. “Anyone can perform at my three weeknight open-mics – no experience needed,” says Curt. The comics who make it to the Hyatt have proven that they’ve got some good material.

Curt’s done standup himself in the past, but he prefers producing. George Peacock of Raymond Street in Chevy Chase also frequently performs at the weekly shows.

Dunston Street’s Chris Palmer served as the night’s emcee. About a year ago, the wildlife filmmaker signed up for a standup comedy class at his daughter’s suggestion. “At first I wasn’t sure about it, but I ended up really liking it,” Chris says. Through the class, Chris evolved into a performer for “Laugh Riot.”

An environmental filmmaker by day, Chris has founded and led two nonprofit organizations that promote wildlife films. The films have received two Emmys and an Oscar nomination. “I just talk about my experiences as a filmmaker, husband and father,” Chris says of his act, which he classifies as “G-rated.”

LEFT: Chris Palmer left England in the early 70s and made his way to Bethesda. ABOVE RIGHT: Comedian Curt Shackelford describes himself as “single, handsome and hugely charismatic.” RIGHT: Rady Akin and Paul Pascal of Bethesda took in the show.

DANCE

Raymond Street’s Nancy Havlik takes the lead with a career in dance

As creator and director of a performance group, Nancy Havlik feels like she’s finally on the right career track. “Dance was always in my heart,” she says. After twenty years as a speech therapist, Nancy reverted to her dancing roots; now, she leads a troupe of actors and choreographers narrative, modern dance pieces. “It’s impressionistic dance with an interface of theatre,” Nancy explains.

The performers are very involved with her creative process, and are encouraged to contribute. Nancy’s always searching for more troupe members – and they aren’t required to be professional dancers. “I look for people who are interesting to watch. They need to have a presence and energy to draw the audience in,” she says.

Nancy’s been working and living in the Chevy Chase area for 25 years, and she’s excited to be a part of the artistic direction the area is taking: “I’m happy to see less conservative performance, and that smaller venues are becoming more popular.”

Nancy keeps moving with “Arts for the Aging” workshops she holds for senior citizens to teach them creative movement.