

SHEPHERD EXPRESS AUGUST 7, 2013

Fabulous Stories - Ex Fabula's new Executive Director Megan McGee

By Marie Kohler



Ex Fabula, a local storytelling organization, has proven enormously successful since its creation five years ago. A grassroots, not-for-profit group, it has grown steadily in audience size and offerings and has just named Megan McGee, a co-founder, as its first executive director.

What's the story behind the founding of Ex Fabula?

A handful of loosely connected people kept talking about how someone should start a storytelling series in Milwaukee. In October of 2009, five of us had lunch at Maharaja: Matt Sabljak, Leah Delaney, Adam Weise, Amy Schleicher and me. It was the first time we'd all met. By lunch's end, we'd determined to have one event six weeks later. Fifty people came, mostly friends and family. We chose a name—"Ex Fabula," meaning "of or from stories" in Latin. At our second event, we had around 80. Soon we were up to 100. Last year, 175 regularly showed up for our monthly shows. Our fifth season begins Oct. 15!

Wow! How have you managed?

A lot of volunteers collaborating. Committees work on finding locations, building the blog and website,

developing themes for events...

For your events, names are drawn from a hat to tell stories tied to a theme. Do you give speakers guidelines?

Know your first line and your last line. Talk for five minutes without notes. And tell the truth.

Are professional storytellers encouraged to participate?

We had an early, vigorous discussion about whether to include local celebrities or writers and decided “no.” Those people already had a platform and didn’t need us. We wanted to go to other people and say, “Everyone’s got a story and we want to hear yours!”

What’s your story?

I grew up in Oshkosh—my father is a professor of economics. I got a B.A. at Eau Claire, then a Master’s in Foreign Language and Literature in Spanish at UW-Milwaukee. I have a good deal of experience teaching. I like the puzzle of language and culture. My love of stories came from my parents, listening to “A Prairie Home Companion.” I’m a fan of “This American Life” and story-telling groups.

Why do you think Ex Fabula has taken off so incredibly?

One of the worst problems people experience is loneliness. If you come to Ex Fabula, you sense this amazing contradiction: each human being is unique, but all of us are also similar. Deep down a lot of us wonder: Do we fit in? Do we have value? Do we have control over our lives? Can we discover our full power? When people come onstage and reveal their humanity—and everyone’s hearing the same story at the same time—it’s powerful. It makes us think of stories from our own lives. It’s connecting. It connects communities! Ex Fabula restores my faith in humanity. We’re all basically good, and we’re all striving for the same things.

For more information about Ex Fabula, visit exfabula.wordpress.com.

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