



National Comedy Tour Will Tickle Your Funny Bone and Touch Your Heart With the Wave of a Hand

As the last of four hearing sons born to Deaf parents, Joe and Yetta Abarbanell of Chicago, Alan Abarbanell spent most of his young life growing up alone with them. He's told he signed before he spoke, recalls answering the phone by age three and interpreting complex medical situations soon after. Alan never felt this responsibility to be unfair or burdensome. It was part of his "normal" existence—during a time before the current technology boom or enforceable accessibility laws for the Deaf existed. However, gradually he began to notice not-so subtle differences between his friend's lives and his. These differences became the basis for what is now his national comedy tour, ***The Abababa Road Tour***. Abarbanell credits his parents, their friends and the intersection between Deaf culture and hearing society with inspiring his raucous humor and interesting perspectives on life; "Standing between different worlds for most of my life, I have come to this conclusion: Given enough latitude, technology and resources there are no limits to the depth of human stupidity and what it can achieve." Both of Abarbanell's parents died in 1988 and while the show is funny, he's quick to explain that he's not making fun of anyone; "I was devoted to my mother and father. I loved them very much and this show is a tribute to them, my Deaf heritage and the bi-cultural experiences of living in-between the Deaf and hearing world's."

Abarbanell, who uses the stage name, "**Abababa**" (a name given to him by a fellow coda [Child of Deaf Adults] who couldn't pronounce Abarbanell) transforms into a host of different characters—Deaf, hearing, family, friends and teachers as he weaves his often jaw-dropping tales of life as he knew it. After Abababa's performance at Boston University last October, Trudy Schafer reporting for The Deaf Community News of the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf, had this to say: "*Alan's uncanny ability to transform himself into a variety of characters takes the audience into the Deaf World and into the living room of the Abarbanell family. There are moments when it almost feels like the boundary between his life and the audience's lives are removed and we are there, watching his life unfold. I strongly urge Deaf people (especially those with hearing children), interpreters, students and those who are interested in the Deaf World to come to his next performance. It is guaranteed to be an unforgettable evening.*"

As his stories unfold, Abababa moves his audiences from laughter to tears, and back to laughter again with the wave of a hand. Audiences have marveled at this prolific storyteller's ability to simultaneously communicate his stories through voice and sign language, constructively leveling the playing field for Deaf and hearing audience members. Abababa is also quickly becoming a much sought after educational tool for universities housing programs with Deaf content. Dr. Robert Hoffmesiter of The Center for the Study of Communication and The Deaf at BU explains: "*The Abababa Road Tour was one of the first to delve into territory that is probably the most private of private in the Deaf World and yet does so in a completely unthreatening, hilarious and touching way. The poignant stories and superb technique of delivery made the show accessible to all. The show may become a fall standard for us as the content presented is discussable within culture, psychology, language, etc. All of which are the foundations for programs that have Deaf content, be it education, interpreting, Deaf Studies, or speech and hearing.*"

In 2004, Abababa appeared at colleges, universities, Deaf organizations and churches and the first national Disability Pride Parade. With stops in Illinois, New York, New Jersey and Boston, The Abababa Road Tour 2005 is scheduled to roll back into Boston and Long Island with additional appearances scheduled for Michigan, Mississippi, California, Oklahoma, Rochester, Tampa and Las Vegas.