

# Voiceover artist gives life to characters

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

Most people who watch cartoons or listen to audio books wonder, sooner or later, about the people behind the voices. Local resident Amanda Berry can give you a pretty good idea. The Enterprise resident does just that, provides voices for both cartoons and books.

Berry, raised in San Antonio, Texas, attended New York University. After 13 years in NYC, she decided to visit her father, Lostine resident Ron Polk, who had invited her to stay for a year. She stayed a lot longer.

About two years ago, Berry got into her voiceover artist career while doing theater in New York. "I auditioned, and they hired me, and now the show is on Netflix," Berry said. "It's called The Ollie and Moon show. It's for children."

Berry does many of the voices on the show, which is about two cats that travel all over the world, learning about different cultures. She enjoys watching the show as well as performing the voices.

When Berry moved to the Wallowa Valley, she started beefing up her recording studio and equipment. She's also auditioning for more roles. She nailed an audition for reading a book series and recently finished the work on the sixth book.

Berry said doing voiceovers is very similar to acting for the most part.

"The difference is, you're not really acting off anyone else," she said. "It's more like playing pretend than acting is, because with acting, you get props, you get costumes, you get another person to react off of. With this, it's just me in my studio, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, all off of things I imagine."

Preparation depends on the type of project. For a book, Berry reads the book before doing any voice recordings. She has to understand the characters and their relationships to one another as well as an idea of



Steve Tool

**Amanda Berry has forged a career as a voiceover artist. Her work includes providing voices for animated films and recorded books.**

the whole arc of the book. Other factors for pre-reading include knowing how to pronounce difficult words and understanding their meaning as well as decoding what characters will sound like.

"If you don't know what you're talking about, it'll come through, no matter how convincing you think you sound, it'll be obvious," she said.

Berry considers every audition a form of practice in the sense she has to be able to read on the fly without making errors.

"It's all within a pretty narrow range that seems far away from me because everything's in a British accent," Berry said.

Berry received the British accent training while at NYU, but she sometimes runs across characters from other cultures that she has to prepare for. Depending on the project, Berry can use her own voice, for example, on a commercial project. She added that cartoons demand different, exaggerated voices that usually require the artist to play multiple characters, all with different voices. A novel can have as many as 30 different characters.

The artist also provided the voice for a young adult

action-adventure novel that she really enjoyed because of their similarity to cartoons.

"Young adult novels can be very dramatic," she said. "A lot of crazy things can happen, and that can allow you to just play and have fun."

Auditioning for a reading is generally done on websites, of which there is a number. The main one is called, ACX, for Audiobook Creation Exchange. Authors post several pages from a work that will show if the applicant can do multiple characters and convey a story arc in a short time. The applicant makes a recording of their reading and submits it to the author. The process is similar for commercial and cartoon work.

Knowing what clients want is the most challenging part of the job for Berry. Sometimes she can be convinced that her choices in portraying a character are the right ones while the author may disagree.

"You have to come at your audition with the conviction that this is the right choice for this character, and hope that you can convince someone else that it is the right choice," she said.

For an interested person to hear Berry's voice on books, they can go on audible.com and search for "The Bennett Wardrobe," which is the name of the book series she is current narrating, or search for her name as a narrator.

Berry's favorite project remains the Ollie and Moon cartoon.

"Cartoons allow you to play," she said. "Anything that comes to mind — sure, it's usable. You get to have fun."

Even though Berry still intends to pursue acting, she doesn't plan on letting her voiceover career stagnate.

"I would love to continue acting, but I like to think of where I am right now as the start of my career," she said. "I put a lot of time, energy and effort in it for a lot of promising early returns, and I can only really see it getting better."



Bill Bradshaw

**Classical guitarist Derek Brown plays Saturday, Oct. 12, during a performance before a crowd of about 65 at the Stein Distillery in Joseph. The Wallowa native was thrilled to play in his home county.**

## Wallowa native guitarist brings music to Joseph

Plays classical, Spanish pieces at Stein Distillery

By Bill Bradshaw  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — a standing-room only crowd of family, old acquaintances and new friends turned out to hear former Wallowa resident Derek Brown perform Spanish, classical and one flamenco piece on his classical guitars at the Stein Distillery in Joseph on Saturday, Oct. 12.

About 65 people crowded into the bar, with its concrete floor not ideal for recording, but fine for a live performance, Brown said.

Brown brought two guitars to play. He built one using spruce, rosewood and cedar. The other was built by a friend in Spain using ebony for the back and fretboard and a rare piece of pine that came from a hospital in Granada, Spain, that dated to 1492. He said that was significant because pine has so much resin it must be thoroughly aged for the resin to dry so the wood is good for use in a guitar.

Brown's audience had glowing comments on his performance.

"I loved it," said Richard Shirley, who was there with his wife, Trilbey. "I thought it was an amazing, generous, well-accomplished performance."

Linda Chrisman, of Wallowa,

had been a teacher at Wallowa High School when Brown was a student there. "I thought it was beautiful, gorgeous; the music is so intricate," she said. "It was different from what I thought it might be, but I thought it was beautiful."

Though she didn't have him in class, she remembered him from the school.

"It was fun to see him," Chrisman said.

Chris Severin, who now lives in Spokane, Wash., knew Brown growing up and still has a lot of family in Wallowa.

"I thought it was amazing. To have someone of that caliber up here in Joseph, Ore.," he said. "I've known Derek for almost 45 years. To see D.J. play like that, it was really great."

Brown's wife, Carol, and daughter, Chayse also were in the audience.

Asked how she liked being married to a professional musician, Carol Brown said, "I love it. We actually met in music school. A bond developed over music."

As for the guitarist himself, Brown was glad to be able to share the music he loves with a hometown crowd.

"Oh, it feels so good to come home," he said. "The people here are so wonderful and the chance to see family and friends and the beautiful fall colors. It's kind of a magical place."

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