

# The rhythm of everyday objects

*'Stomp' veteran Dibble and cast mates make stop at LMC*

By **JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO**  
Sight & Sound Editor

**BENTON HARBOR** — The third time was the charm for Leilani Dibble.

The dancer first saw "Stomp" as a high school student in San Francisco, and was so taken by it that she and a drummer friend auditioned at an open casting call. He got hired. She didn't. Dibble later auditioned in New York City with the same result.

Then on Jan. 20, 2003, she auditioned for the new Boston company of "Stomp" and got the gig.

In addition to her Boston stint, Dibble has performed in Europe, was part of "Stomp Out Loud" cast in Las Vegas, and has been with the national touring company with multiple casts in multiple years.

On Sunday afternoon, Dibble will be among the cast when "Stomp" performs at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre.

Created in 1991 in Brighton, England by buskers Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas, "Stomp" transforms common household and workplace objects into percussion instruments.

Synchronized stiff-bristle brooms become a sweeping orchestra; wooden poles thump and clack in a rhythmic explosion. In fact, "Stomp" uses everything but conventional percussion instruments, including dustbins, tea chests, radiator hoses, boots, hub caps and shopping carts.

It began its Off-Broadway run at the Orpheum Theatre in New York City in 1994, and the act has been performed in more than 50 countries during the past 20 years.

Dibble, who was reached by phone during a tour stop in Ohio, talked about her experiences with the show.

**Q** How has the show changed and evolved in the time you've been with it?



DIBBLE



Photo provided

**"Stomp" – the rhythmic Broadway juggernaut – performs Sunday afternoon at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre.**

**A** I've been with the company for 13 years now, so I've definitely been witness to the metamorphosis of the show over that time. I got hired in 2003 and, since then, there has been cycling in and out of different pieces and different props. Playing different music.

The creators pretty much hand pick every performer and they are the writers, so if there's a number that is a little bit tired or needs some sprucing up, they'll come up with something and we'll workshop it to put into the show. That probably

happens more than people think. There's been a lot of changes over the years. I'm not sure the last time we were in Benton Harbor, but if it's been a few years we will definitely be performing some different pieces this time around, which keeps it fresh and it keeps it fun, which is vital 20 years later.

**Q** I imagine it's a pretty physically demanding show. How do you keep pushing that hard on a tour such as this?

**A** There's eight performers per show. We travel with 12 performers in every cast so people can be swapped in and out so we don't have to do every show because it is so physically demanding. If

## IF YOU GO

**What:** "Stomp"

**When:** 4 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

**How much:** \$35-\$60

**Contact:** 927-1221 or [www.themendelcenter.com](http://www.themendelcenter.com)

**Artist info:** [www.stomponline.com](http://www.stomponline.com)

we did every show we'd be getting a lot more injuries. We all play the brooms. We all play the trash cans. I've worked in New York and worked in Europe and the traveling company in America, and I was traveling on tour in America 10 years ago.

It is still interesting to see the people that Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas bring together. Everyone brings their own strengths, but in the end "Stompers" all become one really big family.

**Q** What can you tell me about your background and how that prepared you for this show?

**A** My background is in dance. I've been dancing since I was a little girl, but I've always loved music, too. I first heard about the show when I was in high school, and I was immediately drawn to it because it was different. It was unlike any other show I had seen. I really wanted to do it. A friend of mine had seen an ad for open auditions for "Stomp" I dragged my drummer friend with me. I did not get hired, but he did. It wasn't until my third audition that I got hired. I think I just realized you could be the best drummer or dancer in the world, but if you don't have that it they are looking for it doesn't matter.

**Q** Using everyday objects to make music is at the heart of this show. As a performer how do you prepare for that?

**A** People don't really practice playing music with everyday objects. At least they didn't before "Stomp," now I don't know, maybe now they do play music with everyday objects.

The cool thing about the whole everyday objects thing is that when we get hired and thrown in the 9-5 to learn the show, they put a broom in everyone's hand and suddenly it's an even playing field. It's just an odd item to play music with.

Like everything else it takes practice. The more time you spend with a prop, the more comfortable you are and the more you feel like exploring it. It's very strange, but it's pretty cool.

**Q** What do you think it is about this show that has allowed it to sustain the success it has over two decades now?

**A** Pretty much everything we've been talking about already. Changing the lineup and set list every few years. One thing I think that keeps it relevant is that within the structure of the show there is space and room to improvise or bring our own flavor to it musically, theatrically. I think that has really kept it fresh throughout the years. You see the same structure, but it's going to feel a little bit different depending on the people on stage.

Maybe they are carrying a different vibe or are making different choices or different character motivations. It makes it fresh for us, and it makes it fresh for audiences who keep coming back.

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