

Hypnotist puts Cedar Grove audience in a trance

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"By the time I count to 10, you will drift into a deep, dark sleep."

The phrase sent dozens of students and their parents into a trance at Cedar Grove High School last Friday night.

"Nothing else matters to you – only the sound of my voice," said "The Incredible Boris," his soothing voice amplified through a microphone and the auditorium's sound system.

About 50 middle-schoolers and family members eager to "go under" became the center of attention as "The Incredible Boris," an international hypnotist, hypnotherapist and entertainer, tried to send them into a state of hypnosis.

Soft music filled the auditorium.

He warned the volunteers, "Put your hands into your own lap or at your sides and take a look around you to notice where everything is, because some of you may fall."



ADAM ANIK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

'The Incredible Boris' hypnotizes a stage full of middle-school students for a series of shenanigans at the Cedar Grove High School auditorium on Friday night, March 25.



He called out the number 10 and all eyes shut. It was only about a minute before bodies started to become limber. Students slouched over in their chairs, and those sitting on the floor fell back.

"If at any point you find your head resting on the shoulder of the person next to you, it's OK, let it," he said.

Little by little, he sent volunteers who were awake – or otherwise not responding to his commands – off stage.

But it wasn't long before those left were pretending to put on suntan lotion and paddle down the Colorado River, causing the audience of about 200 to erupt into laughter at various moments throughout the show.

"The Incredible Boris," whose real name is Boris Cherniak, has performed at venues all over the world including comedy clubs, theaters, cruise ships and schools. The 46-year-old helps guests to overcome their phobias on the TV show "Maury." He's appeared on "Montel" and the "Howie Mandel Show," among other programs.

The show raised about \$1,000 for the Cedar Grove Memorial Middle School Family and School Association and events they sponsor.

Attendees rushed onto stage at a chance to become hypnotized. Cherniak quizzed them before putting them to "sleep."

"How many of you have been hypnotized?" he asked. Only a few raised their hands.

He then asked, "How many of you have ever fallen asleep in class?" Everyone raised their hands.

"Then you've all been in a form of hypnosis," he said.

Dictionary.com defines hypnosis as an "artificially induced trance state resembling sleep, characterized by heightened susceptibility to suggestion." Hypnotization is "to put in the hypnotic state; to influence, control, or direct completely, as by personal charm, words, or domination; or to frighten or startle so that movement is impossible."

Hypnotization has always been made compelling by movies, TV and stories of what it leads people to do. Cherniak explained that it's much more than putting people to sleep and making them squawk like a chicken as others laugh.

"There's always a therapeutic side to it. Most people don't know how far they can take their minds and mold their own environment," he said. "I think there is an added benefit to people who do come up on stage ... for students, it might be doing better in school."

Born in Russia, Cherniak has lived in Canada and the U.S., and traveled all over the world hypnotizing people of all ages. He started with friends and family. His first real gig was a children's party at 17.

"It took off from that point on," he said. "It started out as a hobby and grew into a career that grew beyond my beliefs. I'm literally living my dream."

His material is meant to be entertaining and to provide a positive message. His objective is not meant to make believers out of an audience, he said.

"My job is not to convince, but to entertain. Everything is comedy and theatrical. I try to tell a story with the audience," he said. "I give people a chance to laugh at themselves and see the worlds in a different way. The world is too serious. My job is to put a little smile in there somewhere."

His routine sent some home last Friday convinced they had successfully experienced some form of hypnosis.

"I couldn't open my eyes. I couldn't hear anything. He made me concentrate a lot," said fifth-grader Natalie Booth.

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