

Children's music brought to life with familiar community faces



By Brock Weir

Walking into the Aurora Public Library with her kids in 1987, Kathy Reid Naiman just wanted to introduce her kids to the journeys that can happen between the pages of a book; but this particular trip set the Aurora mother on a different journey all together, one which is set to come full circle at the Aurora Cultural Centre next week.

Ms. Reid Naiman, who is now a duo with her daughter Hannah Shira Naiman, will perform this Saturday, April 6, in 'Fantastical Musical Imaginations', the latest installment of the Cultural Centre's Meridian Magic Carpet Series.

Ms. Reid Naiman saw her career begin at the Aurora Public Library.

A musician ever since she was a teenager, her love of music took something of a backseat once she started her family.

'Then, when I was in Toronto, somebody I knew who did children's music was sick and needed a replacement so I stepped in - then she decided she didn't want to do it anymore and she passed the job onto me. When we moved up to Aurora, I had stopped doing children's music and walked into the Library with my kids just to show them the place. I heard the Library trying to register someone for their music program, but they didn't have a teacher. I decided to apply for it and they accepted me.'

From that chance

beginning, Ms. Reid Naiman has gone on to entertain generations of Aurora kids. What started off at the Aurora Public Library has branched into over 15 albums, a popular YouTube channel and a presence on Spotify.

Children, she says, gravitate towards every kind of music. You can play just about anything and they will accept it ? although, she cautions, not everything is appropriate for the young demographic!

Inspired by the earliest forms of rhymes and songs, Ms. Reid Naiman has put a lot of research into what she does, crafting a set that appeals not only to the youngest children, but offers something for the parents as well.

?It's important that the parents enjoy it because you have to engage them or the children don't care,? she says. ?I think it clicked right at the start in Aurora because, when I started, I had not worked with babies, I had worked with children older than three to five. I had to make up a program I thought might work and it did. It felt so good, so I kept doing it. At one point at the Aurora Public Library, I was doing 21 classes a week, so it was kind of obvious I was clicking.?

It also clicked with Hannah, who started doing music with children professionally about five years ago.

Before focusing in on kids, she explored other areas of music, but following in the family footsteps came naturally.

?She knows a good thing when she hears it!? jokes Kathy when asked what makes she and Hannah gel as a performing duo, before giving a serious answer. ?She liked what I was doing, learned a lot of the songs I had been doing in my classes, used them in her classes, and she does a very similar style ? but now I feel it has come almost full circle now because I feel I am learning from her as much as she is learning from me. She will take a different twist on a song that I have doing for many years and think, ?Oh, that really works! I'll try it that way.'

?She also has an almost-two-year-old who is helping us both learn a lot!?

The most rewarding part of performing with the next generation, she says, is harmonizing with her daughter and being able to interact on stage with her. Not only is it fun, she says, but they have developed a rapport where they can anticipate where each other is going to take a song, almost every step of the way.

Also rewarding for Kathy is the feeling she gets when kids she used to perform for at the Aurora

Public Library bring their own kids to a gig, keeping the tradition alive.

?It makes me feel a little old, but, at the same time, it is just a wonderful feeling to know they valued it so much as a child that they wanted to pass it onto their children,? she says. ?It's the continuity of music and story.?

For more information on Brevik Hall Presents:
Fantastical Musical Imaginations, part of the Meridian Magic Carpet Series,
including tickets, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.