

Stories & Songs with Nonna brings generations together for Italian Heritage Month



Children, parents, and grandparents are invited to come together at the Aurora Public Library this Sunday for a special Italian Heritage Month event featuring singer-songwriter and author Frank Moyo.

Moyo, a York Region-born and Toronto-based music educator, will bring his popular children's book 'Nonna' to Aurora Public Library (APL) on June 14 for an afternoon of interactive storytelling, live music, Italian singalongs, and a fun immersion into the Italian language.

'I grew up with my grandparents, surrounded by them my whole life getting picked up from school, going to school with them, spending the summer with them. Especially in the last five or six years through social media we started to document a lot of what we do at home and what we do at our grandparents' house and through that we gained a presence,' Moyo tells The Auroran.

'The main reasoning behind the Nonna book was the song 'Nonna' I wrote, which was basically an ode to grandmothers.'

Originally inspired by the passing of his other grandmother, Moyo took the song to Canada's Got Talent and the book, illustrated by Kelsey Marshalsey, soon followed.

'People were really engaged with the book,' says Moyo, noting that getting this first installment out to the public was a bit of a learning curve. 'The stories in the book, the whole basis of it, a lot of people, not even just Italians, but in many cultures, could actually relate to it because of their relationships with their grandmothers - little things like your grandmother telling you stories about where she grew up, holding hands walking to school in the morning, or when she would put you to sleep for a nap after lunch during the summer days, or asking 'Who's that?' in a picture she would have up in the living room, which would always bring up a story.

'That was the basics of the book and Kelsey really captured the essence of the story in illustrations. A lot of books on the market are these AI-generated things, but people want real stories. The fact the book was created from a song is something people also resonated with.'

As he looks ahead to Sunday's event, Moyo, a vocal music teacher in the Toronto Catholic District School Board, says it will be an 'engaging' afternoon where, in addition to taking part in the story, kids will also be able to perform with Moyo on various musical instruments.

'I'm a music teacher, but I [learned I] could even incorporate other aspects into my lesson, which could be language, or math, or science, and I would make a song about it, and the kids would just grasp it so much more, because they were engaged musically, rhythmically, into what I was teaching. I started basically teaching them Italian, because it couldn't hurt anyone to learn a new language, and I started teaching them basic formal greetings in Italian, how to pronounce different words in Italian, different types of food, different types of pasta, cheeses, and so on. Now the reading-slash-show is a music lesson, where I teach verbs, I teach different types of food, it's engaging, and then I read the book, and we share thoughts on the book.

'It's a pretty all-encompassing, engaging 45 minutes that the kids are exposed to, then they come up and they perform with me, I give them rhythm instruments, and they're getting incorporated into the set, and I think that's the aspect that they enjoy the most.

'It's obviously Italian Heritage Month, families want their children learning languages, they want their children having fun, they want them to be engaged, they want them to learn with other children as well, and I think that this show and this reading has all of those components all intertwined into that. For a Sunday afternoon in June on a sunny day, I think you can't really beat that experience.?'

Moyo's follow-up book, *Nonno*, based on songs and experiences with his grandfather, is due out next month.

For more information, visit bit.ly/43snTXf.

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