

?Take the music into your heart so you have it forever?



As she headed into a Toronto TV studio in the early morning hours to record a promotion for an upcoming music event in the city, Sharon Hampson had an encounter with a well-wisher that remains as vivid today as ever before.

It was just after 7 a.m., and Hampson was greeted by a fan with tears in her eyes.

Despite having to get to work that morning, the fan just knew she had to make a stop along the way to say thanks for all Hampson, and her musical partners Bram Morrison and the late Lois Lilienstein, had brought into her life.

?I said to her, ?It's okay to get weepy because you're remembering childhood memories, and that's only good,? says Hampson, one third of the iconic Canadian music trio, Sharon, Lois and Bram. ?I'm grateful when people get teary when they meet me because I know they're thinking back to times that were good for them. But, it's not always like that, there are some people for whom we were a rescue, and I'm very aware of that as well.?

Whether their music brought joy, an escape, or a little bit of both, the music of Sharon, Lois, and Bram is an inextricable part of the lives of generations of Canadians, and this Saturday, March 21, Hampson is eager to meet fans as she, along with her daughter Randi and grandson Ethan, participate in a day of special events at the Aurora Public Library (APL) and Aurora Town Square (ATS).

The fun begins at the APL at 10.30 a.m. with the free event Skinnamarink: Storytime with Sharon, Randi, and Ethen. The event will include a meet-and-greet, story time, and, of course, plenty of music.

Focus shifts to the ATS Performance Hall at 2 p.m. when Sharon, joined by Randi and Ethan, will sit down with Andrew Applebaum of the Toronto Legends podcast with reminiscences, tales, and? well, keep your vocal cords warmed up!

?There's about a 99 per cent guarantee some songs will break out,? says Applebaum with a laugh, adding the very idea of him sharing the stage with Hampson is nothing short of ?surreal.?

?Lois used to come into my kindergarten class growing up, so the chance to talk to Sharon for the Toronto Legends podcast was a no-brainer,? he says. ?Sharon was nice enough to do [the podcast], we had a great time, and fast-forward to now we're doing live events where I share stories with these personalities for the bigger audience.

?So many people of my generation really resonate with the whole Sharon, Lois and Bram story.?

The Sharon, Lois and Bram story began in 1978.

Hampson tells The Auroran they had no inkling that when they came together to make that first record they were starting a completely new career trajectory, but what was clear from the outset was the singers shared ?three fundamental goals: really good music, don't cheap out because it's for the kids, and make sure it's for the children and the family.?

Those fundamentals, says Hampson, never changed ? whether they worked as a trio, as Sharon & Bram after Lilienstein's passing, and now as a family act of Sharon, her daughter, and grandson.

?It just came out to us in a really natural way, to sing good songs, to engage the audience, to find physical ways to express ourselves so that they could also join in ? we got better at doing that, we got more relaxed about it, but, I don't know, I think we had something unique to offer.?

?She's not going to say it, but I can say it was like lightening in a bottle,? Randi interjects. ?They just really complemented each other and when they would do the three-part harmonies, there was just nothing, nothing like it at the time.?

Randi grew up in a musical family. In addition to her musical mom, her late father, Joe, was a folk singer and often did musical arrangements for the band.

?My dad would be working on harmonies and he and my mom and I would sit at the piano together and run through tunes together, I would sit in the studio when they were recording and it was just really fun to be in the thick of that. I felt really lucky because we got to hang out in a recording studio or go to the Juno Awards ? ?

?Or be the elephant at the Juno awards!? adds Sharon with a laugh, revealing perhaps a Polkaroo-level secret.

Sharon, Randi and Ethan came together formally as a family band during COVID.

Sheltering in their bubble, they sat down for an impromptu living room concert one day and were astonished to find more than 10,000 viewers watching from around the world. It started off with a capella songs from the Sharon, Lois and Bram songbook before Ethan jumped in with a few chords, his brother Elijah adding some vocals, his dad Jim joining the fun, and it evolved from there.

?There has been a boom in the growth of community choirs, and I think there is a huge appetite among adults to sing and make music together,? says Randi. ?What you can do if you go to a Sharon, Lois and Bram singalong is a family singing together, making music together, and, for a lot of people, reconnecting with your child spirit. A lot of the people who come to the shows now grew up on the music and really want to be transported back to the memories of a simpler time when they could just be carefree. Times are hard, so having a few minutes of respite from the reality of day-to-day life, I think helps to enable us to continue sharing the music.?

This is a sentiment close to Sharon's heart.

?One of our goals was [for listeners] was to take the music into your heart so you have it forever, and I think that we accomplished that because we provided music that people could have access to,? she says. ?I think they saw real people on TV or on the stage. We were not characters.?

For more information about Saturday's free event at the Aurora Public Library and the ticketed afternoon event at Aurora Town

Square, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter