

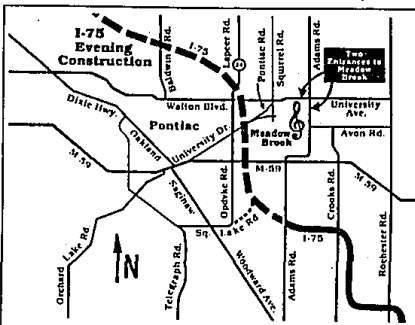
Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, June 10, 1988 O&E

(O&E)



Try alternate route
Meadow Brook personnel suggest that concertgoers take alternate routes to the music festival in order to avoid I-75 construction slow-downs. The festival has supplied this map showing roads that lead to Meadow Brook.



Vocalist Johnny Mathis appears Friday-Saturday and Harry Belafonte sings Monday at Meadow Brook Music Festival.

Meadow Brook begins 25th year

Meadow Brook Music Festival will open its 25th season today, with the Detroit Symphony performing an all-Tchaikovsky concert. Jerzy Semkow will conduct the program featuring pianist Jean-Bernard Pommer.

Popular concerts were added to the festival in 1969, but the DSO has continued to perform at the festival without interruption for 24 years.

Singer Johnny Mathis will return to the outdoor Baldwin Pavilion on Friday and Saturday.

Singer-songwriter Harry Belafonte opens Meadow Brook's second week at 8 p.m. Monday. Comedian Steven Wright and singer Buster Poindexter share the bill Wednesday evening.

World-famous violinist Itzhak

Perelman performs the music of Beethoven with the Detroit Symphony on Thursday, June 23, Jerzy Semkow conducting.

Dinosaurs sing and dance in the Hudson Vagabond Puppets' "Mammoth Follies," a children's concert, at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 25.

Academy award-winning composer Elmer Bernstein will conduct the Detroit Symphony Pops in music from "Animal House," "Airplane," "Ghostbusters" and other movies on Saturday, June 25.

Pianist Jon Kimura Parker will perform with the Detroit Symphony under the baton of Jerzy Semkow on Sunday, June 26.

Evening concerts begin at 8 p.m. except where otherwise noted. The grounds open at 6 p.m.

Nose to nose With the 'Elephant Show' stars

By Cathie Bredendach
special writer

SHARON, LOIS & BRAM, the children's entertainment group loved by the peanut butter crowd and their captivated parents, will open Meadow Brook Music Festival's children's concert series at 11 a.m. Saturday.

The trio's popular "Elephant Show" runs seven days a week on "Nickelodeon," the children's cable network. Nine albums by Sharon, Lois & Bram sell like blockbusters in Canada and are beginning to take off in the U.S.

"Because it's a border city, Detroit is a jump ahead of the rest of the U.S. in knowing about us," Bram Morrison said, over the phone from Toronto. "Our show has been available on CBC since it started."

"The Elephant Show" has caught on in other cities this side of the border since it began showing on U.S. cable networks in October 1987.

Of the group's ability to pick songs kids love, Bram said, "The three of us have spent a lot of time on the floor, nose to nose with children." They all have children, now grown, and Bram believes their involvement with music and the children happened simultaneously. Bram has two adult children and "two and a half grandchildren." Lois has a grown son living in California and Sharon has a daughter in California and a son at a university in Canada.

Before he joined with Sharon and Lois, Bram taught sixth grade, or as they say in Canada, "grade six." He worked as an itinerant music teacher in the schools as well as performing in the Mariposa Folk Festival and touring as guitarist for Alan Mills.

BOTH SHARON & Lois ran music workshops for children in the Toronto schools before the three pooled their experience and repertoires in 1978 to produce their first album "One Elephant, Deux Elephants." "We borrowed \$20,000 from friends and family, most of whom thought they'd never see their money ever again," Bram said.

The three knew they'd struck a chord with the young crowd when only three months later they paid back their investors and had profits besides.

The Toronto-based group draws music from everywhere. Its shows and albums include a healthy selection of folk songs, a smattering of jazz, old round-the-campfire favorites, Mother Goose rhymes, rock tunes, calypso, Broadway hits and songs the entertainers remember



Sharon, Lois & Bram, phenomenally successful entertainers of young people and their families, open the children's concert series Saturday at Meadow Brook Music Festival. If you haven't got your tickets yet, it's too late — the show sold out nine days ago.

from their childhoods — all delivered with effervescent enthusiasm.

"The most important thing in putting over a song is to show you enjoy it," Bram said. "You can't fake it. If 9-year-olds see me having fun doing 'Eensy Weensy Spider' they figure it's OK for them to do it too."

"People like doing things," he said. The group builds activities into its success formula. Fingers dance in "Thumbkin," arms swing like trunks in "One Elephant, Deux Elephants." Kids shout advice to the monkey's mother, and sing along with gusto to most songs.

"Our audiences aren't passive," Bram said, with marked understatement.

The group takes pride in the tremendous variety in its songs and in its arrangements.

"The easy way is to put songs through the same arrangement mill

and have them end up all sounding the same. We don't do that. If it's calypso, we try to make it sound the way they do it in the islands."

Bram said its arrangements vary from "one unaccompanied voice to three-part harmony with a full swing band and everything in between."

THIS YEAR the three celebrate their 10th year as a group. "Luckily we're good friends," Bram said.

They like to get together with their spouses to talk about what makes the world tick and to share their love for good food. "We love to cook, to eat our cooking, and to eat other people's good cooking." When they're on tour they always "look for the good meal in town."

Nowadays when they travel, their elephant mascot comes along as part of the show. A series of accidents entwined their lives with elephants.

The bilingual lead song in their first album, "One Elephant, Deux Elephants," became a hit, so when they needed a name for their record company, Elephant Records seemed a logical choice.

A few years back when they were doing a show in Toronto, the Toronto Dance Company had just ended a production of Babar and had baggy-kneed elephant costumes available. So Sharon, Lois & Bram asked to borrow a costume and a dancer as a cute addition to one of their shows.

"It was an instant success," Bram said, "and we've had an elephant mascot ever since." Now everyone gives them elephants and they love them.

"Our houses are full of elephant figures. I've got hundreds and hundreds in my house."

"They're strong, intelligent, gentle and friendly," Bram said, in praise of elephants. Not a bad recommendation for any creature, even one with wrinkly knees.

On Saturday morning Sharon, Lois & Bram will cavort with an elephant on the Meadow Brook stage and sing songs that make the world seem young and full of magic.

Concert sells out far ahead

Tickets sold out nine days ago for the Sharon, Lois & Bram concert. Meadow Brook Music Festival announced that this was the first time in festival history any concert sold out that far ahead.

Because of the huge crowd, gates will open at 9:30 a.m. instead of the usual 10 a.m. for the concert at 11. Bowman's Catering will serve from 9:30 a.m. until after the concert, at Trumbull Terrace. Available will be lemonade, soft drinks, snacks for kids, and coffee and iced tea for parents.

Sold out are the 2,200 Baldwin Pavilion seats and 5,300 lawn seats, for a total of 7,500 concertgoers, who will gather on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills.

Other concerts in the children's series include the Hudson Vagabond Puppets in "Mammoth Follies," Saturday, June 25; the Piccolo Opera Company in "Little Red Riding Hood," Saturday, June 25; and Bob McGrath of "Sesame Street," Saturday, Aug. 13.

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