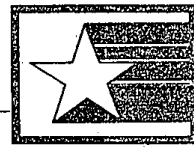


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Doubly talented

Twin brothers share stage in children's concert

Gemini will perform at 11 a.m. Saturday on the Meadow Brook Music Festival stage as part of the Children's Concert Series, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call 377-2010.

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

LITTLE KIDS STARE and adults swivel for a double take because Sandor Slomovits and his brother Laszlo are identical twins.

The 40-year-old, Hungarian-born brothers take the attention in stride and capitalize on the genetic windfall that gives them an immediate "in" with audiences. The Ann Arbor-based folk musicians often wear matching or complementary outfits on stage, and their professional name, Gemini, comes from the mythological twins in the zodiac.

Even though San is a half-inch taller and 10 pounds heavier than his brother, those who don't know them will struggle to tell them apart. San admits he collects twin stories of people's reactions, and he cheerfully apologizes for being "punny" when he says they're used to double takes. Las chuckles about their being invited to sing the National Anthem on Sunday, July 30, at Tiger Stadium when the visiting team will be — who else — the Minnesota Twins.

BEING IDENTICAL twins is a guaranteed attention-grabber, but it's not a focus of their music and doesn't explain their escalating careers. San and Las excel at getting audiences involved in their sing-along, hand-clapping music. Their reputation is growing rapidly and they're playing to larger audiences, not because they're twins, but because they're able musicians who put on a good-time, upbeat show.

In April they played Ann Arbor's large Power Center auditorium. The music festival will be their largest Michigan audience to date. Because they are attuned to the dynamics of audiences, they love the high energy generated by great numbers of people.

In honor of the new directions in their career and bigger audiences, they sometimes perform with a backup band of drums, piano, synthesizer and bass, as they will do for the Meadow Brook concert.

The pair specializes in two kinds of concerts: live shows for school assemblies, and folk shows with songs slanted toward a young audience but

San and Las excel at getting audiences involved in their sing-along, hand-clapping music.

not clearly kids' songs, the kind of show-for-all ages they have planned for the Meadow Brook children's concert. Seven or eight months a year they perform at close-to-home locations. They have played in Detroit-area schools, for family concerts at the Detroit Institute of Arts and at WDET's music festival at Meadow Brook. Three or four months out of every year they take their show on the road to the East Coast and the South.

UNTIL RECENTLY they hadn't played farther West than Chicago. Now they're heading West and have played in Texas and the Dakotas. San and Las have chalked up a few local TV appearances on the children's show, "Dandel Doors," and on "Good Afternoon Detroit," but live performances and recordings have been their main focus. They have recorded four albums, two for families, including their latest, "Growing Up Together," and two for adults.

The themes they sing about are common events in their lives, events with a positive, life-affirming attitude, and they often spice their songs with humor. San says about half the songs they sing in concert they write themselves, and they complement their own material with traditional favorites as well as contemporary songs by other songwriters.

San plays guitar and Las plays a mean fiddle and mandolin, but they also play an intriguing collection of international instruments. San plays some offbeat percussion instruments such as the bones, the limberjack, an Appalachian puppet doll that dances, and a big Irish drum called a bodran. Las plays the ocarina, a small flute that "looks like a sweet potato with holes."

Their original songs like San's "Loose Tooth Blues" and Las' "Just One More" celebrate childhood. Any kid over 8 identifies with the wiggly demise of baby teeth in "Loose Tooth Blues," and every parent recognizes the classic stall tactic of children who plead for just one more — bedtime story or glass of water.

Another song, "I'm Gonna Tell," stirs memories of childhood ven-

geance. The duo even wrote a song about Ann Arbor's famous Zingerman's delicatessen. Las says he "put the menu to music." The lyrics begin, "I'm going to get a sandwich at the deli. I'm tired of peanut butter and jelly" — a silly celebration of one of life's (and Ann Arbor's) simpler pleasures.

SAN AND LAS are both married and have lived in Ann Arbor for the last 16 years. They like the geographic smallness of the town, its small-town feel with big-town events. The Ark coffeehouse, an Ann Arbor folk tradition, has exposed them to other styles of music and enriched their own repertoire.

They especially admire Tom Paxton and regard him as both musical mentor and friend. Neither Las nor San has children so they write songs from their own memories of childhood and from experiences with friends' children.

The international flavor of their show comes naturally to the pair, who have lived in Hungary, and the United States. They often open their shows with the "Greeting Song," which says hello in eight languages.

A Russian folk song they sing in English reflects both the uplifting tone of the music they prefer and their international roots. It begins, "May there always be sunshine."

The Slomovits family left Budapest during the Hungarian Revolution when Las and San were 8 years old. Their father was a cantor in a synagogue. The family emigrated to Israel where they lived for a few years before coming to the United States and settling in Kingston, New York.

GROWING UP, they sang often as a two-man chorus with their father in the synagogue, and they give him credit for their good tenor voices and musical training. At 7, San began studying piano and Las played violin. The showmanship in their personalities they attribute to their mother.

Both San and Las went to college at the University of Rochester in New York. Sometimes people assume identical twins choose to lead identical lives. San and Las graduated from the same university, but they didn't plan it that way. Each applied to many different schools.

The University of Rochester offered both of them scholarships, so their lives continued to run parallel. Las majored in English intending to



Family concerts are a big part of the musical offerings by Gemini — Sandor and Laszlo Slomovits. The Hungarian-born twins sing and play more than a dozen instruments.

be a teacher, and San majored in history with thoughts of becoming a lawyer.

They had been singing together for years, and after graduation they decided to give a performing career a try. Gemini came to Ann Arbor be-

cause one of their wives wanted to attend graduate school at the University of Michigan.

San's wife, Brenda, works as a graphic artist for the university. She designs Gemini's album covers and play autoharp backup at recording

sessions. Las' wife Helen runs a picture-framing business and plays backup flute.

The brothers spend a lot of time together rehearsing songs and driving 30,000-35,000 miles a year getting to bookings.

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