

**Story and photo
by Amy Borrelli**

Somewhere between the Teletubbies and Green Day, there must be a common ground for entertainment that gets a stamp of approval from both kids and parents.

Beth & Scott, consider yourselves stamped.

Beth and Scott Bierko are in their second decade of making music and performing for children, and are venturing into the world of video with a live concert on Saturday, September 16 at the Yorktown Stage that will be filmed and packaged as a DVD.

The Bierkos were making music for kids even before they had a family of their own (their daughters, Helen and Stephanie, currently attend Mildred E. Strang Middle School and French Hill Elementary School).

For subject matter, all they had to do was think back to their own childhoods.

"We thought about all the things we had done as kids, what made us uncomfortable, what made us happy, what made us laugh, what were arguments between us and our parents," recalled Scott. "We started writing songs around those topics, and it came very fast and very easy, as compared to when I was trying to write songs for adults and I really had nothing to say."

So, the audience at Saturday's show might be treated to songs about the drudgery of doing chores (especially folding the laundry), or being afraid of the dark, or wanting to play instead of hitting the hay at night.

"There are a lot of knowing winks that go on between kids and their parents when they hear certain songs," said Scott. "We like showing on stage what people experience in their lives. It also helps families to know they're not strange."

"A parent said to me, 'Your songs about going to bed and about doing laundry are really about self-esteem, because it makes kids think, 'I'm normal!'," said Beth. "This is everybody's struggle. You learn to deal with this type of stuff."

The couple met in the early '90s in Manhattan when Beth was a struggling actress and Scott was a "guitarist on hiatus" employed in construction. At the suggestion of a friend, they decided to give children's music a try, but found that there wasn't exactly a dearth of recordings out there, despite a clear market for family entertainment.

"A lot of it was Disney stuff. Raffi was still big. Shari Lewis. It was limited," said Beth. "What we discovered once we got into it was that there are hundreds and thousands of independent artists who write great music, and it's just not easily available to families."

"The unfortunate truth is that it's just not promoted. The big record companies realize that even the smallest rock acts can out-sell the biggest children's acts. Fifteen years ago they pulled support and went for licensed cartoon characters," said Scott. "But now it's changed. And that's part of the reason why we're doing this. There seems to be a resurgence of interest in live people. Being live people, we're grateful."

One of the first songs the couple wrote together focused directly on the self-esteem theme.

"We were going through a period where we were abandoning the traditional dream of having a secure job and making money that way, and taking a chance and being artists. We wrote *Believe in Yourself and Your Dreams* from our own hearts," said Scott. "That became a message to remind us any time we go into something difficult, but also a message we can pass on to families."

Calling themselves Beth & Scott and Friends—the "friends" being their young audience, who they consider essential in bringing their music to life—the couple found the early years as a singing group rough going.

"There were a lot of years when we did

Yorktown couple hopes to get kids' toes tapping this weekend

not think we were going to have enough money to make it. Sometimes we were supported by our families to help us get through lean times," recalled Scott. "But Beth and I believe we were put on this earth with these talents to do something with them. That was driving us forward: to do good work for children, to help kids learn and sing, to help families to sing together."

Beth & Scott began making a name for themselves on the Arts and Education circuit, performing at schools, libraries and

"Kids are so visual, we thought a DVD would be great. It's been on our list of things to do," said Beth.

The venue—the Yorktown Stage Theater at the community center on Commerce Street—was chosen for its location near the Bierko's home, as well as for the proprietor, Barry Liebman, who worked in community theater with Scott's parents.

"Yorktown Stage has that family connection, with Barry," said Beth. "It was very serendipitous. He's found there's great support for family entertainment, and people

are looking for quality shows to bring their kids to. He was already contemplating an idea for a children's series. We thought it'd be a great place for us to do the video."

The couple is hoping for a packed house for this weekend's concert, which will be filmed with four cameras that will be focused on the audience as much as on the band on stage.

"If you're on the run from the law, or if you just don't want to be filmed, ask for a seat in the back," said Beth.

Tickets for the performance, which begins at 1 p.m. Saturday, are \$10 and are available by contacting the theater at (914) 962-0606 or at www.yorktown-stage.org. The target audience is children ages two through eight, but everyone is invited to this family-oriented show.

"We loved the idea of doing it live, of capturing what we do, and capturing the kids. We have the best seat in the house, seeing their faces," said Beth. "One of our real missions is to get kids actively involved. It's not them watching us sing, it's them singing with us, it's them dancing with us, it's all of us doing these silly goofy songs together that builds a sense that we're all artists and we're a community."



Beth and Scott Bierko

summer camps throughout the tri-state area.

"We didn't know when we first started we'd be working in schools. We thought we would be able to learn our craft in schools for a few years, and then get a television show and make records," said Scott. "But we found we loved performing for kids and writing Arts and Education material."

"Working in the schools brought out the teacher in us. We got so much feedback. You'd see what was relevant in terms of curriculum, and in the lives of kids," said Beth.

"And these children listened to us so much more than our own children," noted Scott.

After years of requests from parents, Beth & Scott released a CD, *Learn and Play*, in 2003, as well as a CD of holiday songs, and now they're branching out into video.

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