



Children's Musical Marshmallow Island Gets a Facelift

By Sheri Shefa, Canadian Jewish Newspaper

The Legend of Marshmallow Island, a show that delighted children for the first time nearly three years ago, has had a facelift and will be presented next month in Vaughan, Ont.

Lorne Lampert, the founder and CDO (Chief Drumming Officer) of Mystic Drumz, “a world-music percussion entertainment company,” wrote, produced and stars in the one-man interactive show that combines storytelling, musical instruments from around the world, multimedia sets and eco-friendly messages.

The show, which plays at the City Playhouse on Oct. 19, is about a boy who is on a journey to find the legendary island.

“We travel around the world to find a marshmallow island, so it’s silly, and we find these characters, little woodland animals, that talk and give us clues, and they’re very funny and have their own personalities and attitudes,” said Lampert, who has a degree in music education and is a percussionist with an established nine-piece band called King Sunshine.

“It’s as interactive as a show can get. You have a stage performer and a theatre, but the audience is asked to get up and dance, clap along – we bring some kids up on stage.” He said that since the première of the show in December 2005, he’s done hundreds of private shows at camps, day cares and schools throughout Ontario, but this is the first time he’ll be presenting the production to the public.

“This is like version 2.1. It’s gone through a lot of changes. For those who might have seen the show three years ago, there is a whole new face on it, new characters, new plot twists, new instruments. It’s had a facelift, and it’s ready to come out again,” he said.

Lampert, who believes that children don’t get enough music education in schools, hopes that his show, for children aged three to 11, will pique their interest in music and the arts.

Percussion instruments from South India, Africa and the Middle East are an important part of the show, but now the multimedia aspect of the show shares centre-stage with the instruments.



“We have live video recording of different musicians, so that when I travel to India [during the performance], I’m talking to an Indian drummer on the screen. There appears to be more live performers in the show than there are,” he said.

“While we’re travelling from country to country, the video mixer changes the backdrop so it feels like we’re flying on a plane, or that we’re on a train, or suddenly we’re in a full, lush forest.”

Lampert said another aspect of the production that has evolved is the incorporation of eco-education into the story-line.

“It’s totally worked into the play, for example, how frogs are bellwethers of nature, and if you see that the frogs are getting sick that means that we should worry. Part of the show talks about the fragility of the ecosystem,” he said.

“Not only are we travelling the world trying to find Marshmallow Island, but we’re trying to understand the delicacy of the planet,” he said, adding that eco-friendly groups have agreed to set up booths in the playhouse lobby to hand out pamphlets and brochures. Lampert, who was given the opportunity years ago to hone his musical education skills with campers at a Jewish Reform overnight camp in Mississippi, said that children respond to the show because this kind of educational, interactive entertainment is nothing they are used to.

“The attraction is in the realness and grassroots feeling. Too much children’s entertainment has become overdrawn and flashy. We are trying to create a reality show for children... It’s time to get back to real-life performers entertaining our children,” he said.

“We don’t talk down to the kids. We treat the kids like they’re adults. We’re talking to them as real people, and they seem to relate to that.”

Lampert has been building his company, Mystic Drumz, for 12 years and is continuing to broaden the reach of his work.

He is working toward creating a pilot for a TV show based on his play and is also putting the finishing touches on five other shows that are meant to make up a series. The next show that he hopes to present is called The Button People.

“We have a few shows all built into this format, which seems to really work with multiple age groups.”



Lampert performs two shows on Oct. 19. The first show begins at 11:00 a.m, and is presented by the aliyah chapter of Canadian Hadassah WIZO, in support of the annual One Campaign, which assists children, women and youth at risk in Israel, as well as women and children in Toronto. What A Bagel will be sponsoring a brunch before the show.

The 1:30 p.m. performance is in support of SickKids Foundation. A portion of the proceeds from ticket sales will be donated to the SickKids Foundation, in support of pediatric research.

“By putting [a charity] in the public eye, it reminds people that there are people who aren’t as fortunate as we are, and we can come out and have a great day and also help someone out,” Lampert said.