

## Sharing the magic

Sandi and Stevie delight children with their imaginative songs



by Casey Reivich

Sandi and Stevie love what they do. They describe their jobs as magical.

Sandi Hunt, who sometimes dons long rainbow colored eyelashes and a clown fish hat, and Stevie Morgan, who often goes to work in a green wig, have been entertaining Bay Area youngsters for the past four years.

Children are fast falling in love with their catchy songs about ballerina octopuses and green grasshoppers, and their fun and playful costumes. On any given day the Danville couple jet off to multiple performances at different locations. These two singer songwriters love what they're doing, but admit it's a tremendous amount of work.

"It's a fulltime job. We do everything associated with the company. All of the technical stuff, the finances, taxes, Web site, graphic design, fliers, brochures. The two of us do everything," said Stevie.

They write and research all of their own songs, and they set up and take down their shows.

Neither started off as children's entertainers. Sandi, who was born in Vallejo, started singing at a young age in her church choir.

"I didn't know I was good, I just enjoyed it," she said.

Eventually she joined the gospel group Zoe and recorded songs with it. Sandi later went to work at Back Street Records as a producer. She developed up-and-coming local artists. She has also sung with recording artists such as Rick James and Coolio.

Stevie was born and raised in Wales. He came to the United States as a computer consultant. He has lived in London, New York and Missouri. When he first moved to

California, he settled in Walnut Creek. Despite his work in computers, music has always been Stevie's first love. In addition to his day job, he wrote and recorded three rock albums.

In 1998, Stevie moved to Danville, drawn by the town's quaintness. "Danville is a cute town. The area reminds me of Wales in the winter when the hills are green," he said.

Sandi and Stevie eventually met at a party in San Francisco. The two singer songwriters struck up a conversation and they have been together ever since.

"We fell madly in love and I couldn't live without him," said Sandi.

They had a few occasions to collaborate musically. The two both participated in a tribute album to the late BeeGee, Morris Gibb—Stevie's greatest musical influence. Later a graphic designer approached them about making an album of insect songs for children.

Neither Sandi nor Stevie had ever written children's music before. They had never even listened to children's music. They both decided that they would not imitate or try to mimic other entertainers' styles.

"We deliberately didn't listen to other people's children's music. We had no interest,"

said Stevie. They wanted to create their own sound and style based on what they enjoyed.

Both researched the habits and traits of various insects. Sandi, who also shares a passion for gardening, already knew about creatures of the garden.

Sandi and Stevie both naturally improvise songs throughout the day and said they were able to take these little melodies and put them to use. When they first start writing, they write separately. In the end, however, they consult one another. "It's never finished until we've both looked at it," said Stevie.

Sandi enjoys the writing process. "It's very exciting. It's almost like magic. When it's time to write, something takes over," she said.

They presented their insect songs to the graphic design company and the company loved it.

"People kept hearing the songs and they would say, 'These should be a show,'" said Stevie.

They performed their insect songs for the first time at the Crow Canyon Gardens at the Crow Canyon Institute. The show was a success. They decided they were on to something.

As demand for their act grew, Sandi and Stevie decided to make it their fulltime

jobs. They have performed their insect songs everywhere from individual birthday parties to Children's Hospital Oakland to the Children's Film Festival in Danville.

Their show, they said, is always evolving. "The show tells us what to do," said Stevie. "The show is a natural development." Sandi and Stevie see with each show what works and what doesn't work.

One thing is constant: Kids love Sandi's costumes and crack up at the sight of Stevie. "They love Stevie. He's so funny. Before he even does anything, they start to laugh. It just makes him act sillier," said Sandi.

Stevie and Sandi knew their music had made an impact when they once got a call from a teacher at Greenbrook Elementary. The teacher called to ask them for permission to use some of their songs. Sandi and Stevie thought nothing of it. "We didn't have a clue of what they would do," said Stevie.

A couple of months later they received a flier in the mail from Greenbrook about the end of the year concert. The concert was called "Insect Carnival," which is the name of one of their songs. They were intrigued and they decided to go the concert. The school gym, they recalled, was decorated all over in insects. When Sandi and Stevie opened the program, they were amazed to find the children were performing all of their songs.

"I cried. I couldn't believe it," said Sandi. "We had such a special time."

The popularity of the insect songs inspired Sandi and Stevie to make their second album, "Sea Life Songs." Singing on the album are 11 Greenbrook students along with their neighbor's children.

This July, Sandi and Stevie are busier than ever. They were part of the Discover Danville's float in the Fourth of July parade.

