

The Koois – Family and Musicians Extraordinaire

It is an understatement to say that music is important to the Kooi family (pronounced “coy”)! The family includes Terry (father), Julie (mother), Nikolaas (18), Meia (17), Joseph (16), and Anika (15). A list of instruments that these young people play include: organ, piano, violin, guitar, flute, banjo and bones.

At the age of 16, Terry began to play the piano and trumpet. He particularly loved the harmony of voices and instruments.

When the children were little, Terry and Julie began to teach them to harmonize. As they grew older Terry would call nursing homes and offer to have the family to perform. Once people realized how talented the children were, nursing homes began to call them.

As Terry said, playing for churches and seniors’ groups has “opened up the world to the kids... because of “the variety of peoples.” Over the years, what has impressed the Kooi family is the “friendliness of the people.” And, “...I look at it this way: the kids have been able to do what they do and gives us the opportunity to crash others’ parties!” In performing for different groups...”it makes it easier for lots of people to talk to us...”

Speaking of lots of people talking to the Koois. Anika and Joseph felt so special at the Grand Rapids Bones Fest, because they were the only teenagers that attended. The Grandparents Kooi had driven them to the fest. According to Terry, the grandparents had a wonderful time.

At the bones fest, Anika and Joseph definitely made a lasting impression when they played the bones and tap danced at the same time. I asked Anika and Joseph what was most memorable about the bones fest. Both enjoyed the different styles of the bones players. They experienced the people being fun, accepting, and mostly encouraging them in their talents.

The Meschers first met the Koois in 2009 at the Le Mars Music Festival. Joseph had attended one of our bones workshops, and expressed an interest in learning to play. Terry purchased a pair of Jerry’s home-made bones. When the Meschers saw Joseph the next year at the festival, they were blown away with his bones playing! In one year he was doing what it might take others years to learn. Then, Joseph taught Anika to play. At the festival in 2013, the brother and sister played together. Again, the Meschers were astonished at Anika’s bones playing! Plus, they were now tap dancing, too. Jerry’s dream of passing on bones playing had come to fruition.

It is obvious that the Kooi children are disciplined in practicing. For some time, the children practiced daily for about 30 minutes. Now, they practice “their individual instruments alone each school day. We perform less as well now that

the kids are getting bigger and busier so our practice together generally is when we are performing.” But, as Anika told me, they “do have the weekends off.”

In a nutshell, Terry expressed it best: “...the bones are a wonderful, convenient instrument. I wish that there would be more people that knew about them... and learn them because they could so easily be a part of different bands.” We hope, and believe, that Terry’s wish will continue to be a reality through the Rhythm Bones Society: to pass this unique instrument on to future generations.

You can read more about this amazingly talented family on their website:
www.thekooifamily.weebly.com

Sharon Mescher