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Married duo performs live virtual show for Lake County Folk Club

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By **SHERYL DEVORE**
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Wife/husband duo Jenny and Robin Bienemann will perform live Feb. 21 for the virtual Lake County Folk Club monthly concert. (Jenny and Robin Bienemann)

The first time Jenny Bienemann heard her husband Robin Bienemann perform on stage, she said, “I was gobsmacked. What he can do on a guitar is ridiculous.”

When Robin heard Jenny perform, he was struck by the unique, bell-like tone she produced on the guitar. He also loved her poetic, offbeat lyrics.

“A romance started with us being crazy about each other’s songs and music,” Robin said.

Married for 22 years, the singer/songwriting duo performs a live virtual show on Feb. 21 for the Lake County Folk Club.

Their music has been said to celebrate modern life.

Consider Jenny’s latest piece, which she’ll perform at the folk club session, called “The Couch.”

The first line of the tune is, “It’s not fair to the bed how much I love falling asleep on the couch.”

Jenny also has a poignant side, revealed in a tune she wrote called “I Miss You” during the pandemic. A video shows her strolling by herself with views of people including her musician friends in their separate homes.

Robin said his writing style often includes humor. A fan favorite he wrote, which they’ll perform at the live concert, is called “Jennifer Aniston.”

The audience often joins in during the chorus, he said.

Jenny explained: “Robin has made a portrait of Jennifer Aniston that paints her as one of us with hopes and dreams and disappointments. She becomes thoroughly human, as we tell the story. At the end, the whole room is singing, ‘It’s on again, off again with Jennifer Aniston.’”

Several years ago, the duo performed what they called their dream concert for WFMT. From the performance came one of their CDs, “Jenny and Robin Bienemann: Live on Folkstage.”

Though the pandemic canceled all their live concerts, it didn’t stop the couple from making music and performing for fans and with fellow artists.

For example, Jenny, who has been writing haiku for several years, created an online virtual performance of fellow musicians creating tunes to accompany her poetry.

She calls it Haiku Milieu.

“We collected all the songs on a YouTube channel. We’ve turned it all into movies, with all the talent we know. It’s a video of songs and haiku strung together,” she said.

“We’re doing this for the listeners. Everything starts with the audience,” Jenny said.

“The audience is watching us from their home and they’re viewing us in our home. That is totally unlike anything you get in a live club.

“We both think the main thing in life is to give. When you can’t give your talents and your insights, it doesn’t go well. We wanted to continue to give and to have our artist friends do it alongside us,” she said.

Robin is completing his newest album, “Animal Communicator,” which includes a song about a dodo bird — and maybe one about his big white cat sitting on his lap. He hopes to release it in April or May.

Once the world reopens, the couple, who live in Oak Park, will start a “Twosday Night Special” at Hey Nonny in Arlington Heights, featuring duo performers.

Said Jenny: “For us folk music is about looking at the world around you, making something beautiful out of whatever is happening and then sharing that with the people around you. Folk music really prioritizes family, friendship — the things that help you endure when things get difficult. That’s what we’re in it for. That’s who we are. We are here to engage and inspire and feed the fire.”

Robin added they enjoy doing separate projects as well as joining their two musical styles to perform together.

“We just have so much fun doing it. I think people really have fun watching us,” he said.

The couple has performed for the folk club several times.

“We love the Lake County Folk Club,” Jenny said. “We’re looking forward to being in the company of our old friends and some new friends. We’ll have a good mix of songs they already know, plus some from Robin’s new project.”

Jenny and Robin Bienemann in Concert (Livestream)

When: Feb. 21

Where: Virtual

Tickets: Free; online donations accepted

Information: thelakecountyfolkclub.org

Sheryl DeVore is a freelance reporter with the News-Sun.

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