

Delta Leisure

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Something to Tell at arts centre

Robert Stelmach brings his onstage persona, Max Tell, to Tsawwassen to kick off Family Series

Dave Willis, The Delta Optimist

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It doesn't take much for children's entertainer Robert Stelmach to transform into his onstage persona Max Tell.

"I can just drop into it. It's like putting on different clothes, it's just faster," says the writer, singer, performer and storyteller.

Stelmach will bring his act to the Tsawwassen Arts Centre next Saturday.

"He's pretty much me. I get a little brighter when I'm Max Tell. You put on a persona and you become much more fun," Stelmach says, before quickly adding he's not an un-fun guy himself.

He'll be joined by accompanist Chris Kelly for the show in Tsawwassen. The pair has been working together for close to four years.

"We'll be getting the audience to participate as much as possible. We like to get the kids laughing and the parents involved as well."

The performance, an all-musical event, is geared towards kids from preschool up to

12-years-old.

For Stelmach, who's been performing as Tell since the mid-1980s, connecting with his audience is a major upside to his job.

"I just love doing it. I really enjoy just seeing the sparkle in young people's eyes. And in the parents' eyes. I love it when they participate with me," he says. "When I get out in front of my audience and they click with me, it's such a pleasure."

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Robert Stelmach

He says performing for an audience is "absolutely" rewarding.

"They touch my heart."

The 62-year-old White Rock resident says on his website that well-crafted stories and songs have the ability to empower young people and teach us about ourselves.

"Anything that is well written ... a good song or good story has at least something to teach," he says, adding that it doesn't necessarily have to be in a moralizing fashion.

"It helps young people to look [at] the world slightly different. Sometimes it's just for a giggle. And that in itself is looking at the world a little differently. If you start off the day and feel badly, have a giggle, and you feel better. Because I write for young people, some of my pieces are just little giggles. But others have more depth to them."



Photo: Chris Kelly

Stelmach, the owner of a bachelor of fine arts degree in theatre, has had a career that's taken him around the world.

He's performed in Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Seattle and Ontario and has taken part in events like the Vancouver Children's Festival and the Vancouver Storytelling Festival.

One of his recent stories, Fieso, the Book Burro, was a runner-up in the 2007 Union of Canadian Writers' Writing for Children Competition.

He's released a handful of children's audio books, with the latest, Little Johnny Small and Other Stories, being launched this weekend.

Stelmach performs as Max Tell at the Tsawwassen Arts Centre on Saturday, Feb. 9 at 2 p.m. Tickets cost \$7 each or three for \$20. The show kicks off the centre's Family Series.

Call 604-943-9787 or visit www.deltaartscouncil.com for more information.