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Meet The Stich Family

Wednesday 4.1.2015 @ 12:00am | [ImagesAZ](#) | [Family](#)



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Writer Peni Long

Adam and Ashley Stich are dedicated to their careers, each other, their children and the magic of music as an integral part of life. Arizonans since 2011, they relish the sun and warmth of the Southwestern climate and have quickly become an integral part of the educational and musical arts scene in the North Valley.

For Adam, it has always been about the music. Although he also coached football, his driver was music. With a master's in music and doctorate in musical arts from the University of South Carolina, Adam became an instructor of choral music at Eastern Illinois University. But the lure of warm weather and a position with Scottsdale Community College as director of choirs provided a double incentive to relocate. The rest, as they say, is history, and the Stich family has become an integral part of the local educational and musical community.

For her part, Ashley also savors the warm climate of her Arizona home and has established her own career as a residential faculty member with Mesa Community College. She teaches reading to a student population with a large international mix and also focuses on guiding students to finding career path alternatives. Adam provides the same sort of guidance at SCC as an academic advisor. Both Adam and Ashley are convinced that this type of one-on-one intervention is critical for students facing so many choices and pressures today, and also believe that students engaged in campus activities are likely to be more successful in their chosen path.

"I even developed a checklist for our students," says Adam. "It's a way to help them think about their talents, interests and options and maybe find new pathways that they had not considered before."

Striking the Right Chord

Adam brings that same innovative spirit to his role as the artistic director for ProMusica Arizona, which presents four concerts each season. For each concert, Adam is totally engaged in developing the concept, finding the right music, attracting talent, working with local performance venues to schedule productions, coordinating with ProMusica's staff and board of directors, scheduling rehearsals and bringing the concert to the stage.

"It's not just the music; it's a complete event," he says. One of his drivers these days is also audience development. "In many ways for today's audience, the laundry list approach to a concert doesn't really work. People like a plot, something they can relate to. And today's technology may be having a big impact."

Ashley supports this thought and although she claims to have no musical talent at all, helped Adam develop the concept for the innovative Henry Hicklebee concert, an event that allows audience members to drive the plot and choices of music.

"We were talking about all of this in the kitchen one evening," says Ashley, "and it just came to mind that this could be like the 'Choose Your Own Adventure' kids' books." Her approach syncs nicely with Adam's

perspective on story progression, which he learned while pursuing his undergraduate degree in theater.

For this concert, Adam has written the dialogue, Ashley helped with the plot and both collaborated on how and when the audience would use today's technology to help the production's hero make his journey of discovery. When he reaches a decision point, cell phone or text votes from the audience will signal the choice to be made and ultimately tell the tale. Results will be shown on a large screen and the orchestra, chorale and intrepid hero will move to the music selected to support the choice.

“We hope to expose people to great music in an engaging way that also reflects today's world of technology and choice,” says Adam.

It's a challenge that requires about 40 songs and 70 monologues for the lead character to be rehearsed, but one that the Stiches and ProMusica cast and crew hope will engage audience members of all ages in a memorable experience that helps foster continued interest in live music.

Enjoying Family Time

Married for more than 11 years, Adam and Ashley are the proud parents of Finn, 5, and Piper, 3. Finn is much like his dad, interested in music and sports — and sometimes acts as an unofficial but enthusiastic co-conductor from his seat at a concert or plays the “conducting game,” where he directs his dad. Piper may be artistic, but like many girls her age is largely interested in the three Ps: princesses, purple and puzzles. As a family, the Stiches enjoy camping and local attractions like the zoo and children's museum and of course, the warmth of the Arizona sun.

All in all, the Stich family has found a home in Arizona that provides plenty of opportunity for teaching, having fun and making beautiful music together.

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