

50  
FIVE  
QUESTIONS  
WITH...

## Kathy Brodsky

**Hometown:** Manchester**Project:** Wrote the children's book "The Inside Story."**Synopsis:** Like her first book, "My Bent Tree," Brodsky teams up with Manchester illustrator Cameron Bennett.

## 1 What's the main theme to "The Inside Story?"

Even though the story is an adventure about recycling and the mail system, I think the main theme is about change. Change is difficult for all of us. Kids often deal with change — in school, in their families, in their neighborhoods. Change is very unsettling, and we often feel we don't know what's going on. That's what happens to the little envelope in "The Inside Story."

## 2 Unlike most children's book authors, you provide questions in the back of your book for teachers and parents. How much do you want your book to be a teaching tool?



BRODSKY

I wanted my books to have several different dimensions. They can be just a story, or they can be more than that. Recently, I overheard someone telling another person about my books. "They grow with the child," she said.

## 3 Children's books often rely on a central character. Talk about how you settled on yours.

I was at a friend's house on a snowy day last February. She had some envelopes to mail. Because of the weather, I thought she probably didn't want to go out, so I offered to mail them for her. She replied, "They'll be very happy." That sentence stuck with me, and four nights later, sitting at my computer at midnight, "The Inside Story" was born.

## 4 How has your experience as a psychotherapist helped you in writing your children's books?

I think my almost 39 years as a clinical social worker have definitely influenced my writing. Both of my books for children have messages in them that come from my social work experience. "My Bent Tree" is about differences, friendship, loyalty, and social action and conservation. I feel very strongly that all of us can be productive and contribute — even if we may be different in some way.

## 5 How important is it to get kids interested in reading?

Reading is very important, and also very special. Reading is magical in so many ways. It takes us away from our ordinary lives. It can be fun, serious, or a learning experience. Reading helps us grow. When we read, we use our imaginations. We form pictures in our heads of what we read. They are our unique pictures. I remember when I read "The Secret Garden." I had an image of how it looked. Years later, when I saw the movie, I remember thinking that the garden I saw on the screen wasn't "my" "Secret Garden." That wasn't the picture I had in my imagination. I think that reading a lot when kids are little helps them write — at any age.

**What's next:** By next summer, Brodsky plans to release a picture book, "Just Sniffing Around," that will be about all the things that dogs do. Her dog Cali, a French Mastiff, will be the star.

Following that will be a cat book that will involve asking people to submit pictures of their cats. For each submission, they will be asked to donate to an animal shelter. One cat will be picked to star in the book. People can send their e-mail addresses to Kathy@helpingwords.com and write "cat contest" in the subject line.

Web site: kathybrodsky.com

— Michael Cousineau



Eastern Sound Orchestra has been spreading the Polka fun for 33 years. Richard Lapadula, left, Peter Sylvester, John Sobczak, Chester Wodarski, Mike Petrishen and Tony Malioneck.

COURTESY PHOTO

## Polka Party

◆ **33 years of dancing:** Band travels the country and beyond, keeping a Polish tradition moving.

By BARBARA LEECH  
Special to the Sunday News

While many prepare for the holiday season, members of Eastern Sound Orchestra, a top polka band, whose members are celebrating their 33rd year together, are excited about the next big season of concerts.

"We are on the road and doing shows from April on," John Sobczak says. "Summer is big for us with performances at the Hampton Beach Sea Shell stage and the Seafood Festival, but we do a lot of traveling for our shows as well. It's still exciting after all these years."

Sobczak should know. He is one of the three original members of the six-member group. The other three have been with Eastern Sound for 15 years, making it one of the most stable bands around, according to Sobczak.

"Basically, we just all get along really well and really have a good time performing," Sobczak says. "Sometimes we are on the road in a bus or all in a big van and it is fun. And we all love polka just as much as the crowds who come to see us."

Eastern Sound Orchestra was voted the "best polka band in New Hampshire" by New Hampshire Magazine in 2002. Sobczak, drummer for the group, says the band travels all over the United States, "from Montreal to Miami" with its fiddle-driven, East Coast style of polka.

All of the members of the group grew up with

polka. Sobczak says that his parents met at a Polish dance in Salem, Mass., and he went to dances as a young child. He and other band members listened and were inspired by the music of Al Sojka, L'il Wally, Walt Solak and Happy Louie, popular regional band leaders who helped create the contemporary East Coast polka style.

Sobczak says Eastern style, like the dancing that it accompanies, is more relaxed than the Chicago style of polka in the Midwest.

Since its founding in 1975, the Eastern Sound Orchestra has played hundreds of concerts and dances throughout the country. Like most contemporary polka bands, they play music from a variety of genres, including country, rock and roll, and big band, but the emphasis is on older, traditional Polish songs and tunes.

Audiences love to get up and dance, according to Sobczak, and those who don't know how to polka are taught by the band members.

Three of the band members also sing in Polish. Accordionist Chester Wodarski was born and raised in Poland. Founding member Tony Malioneck, who plays accordion, trumpet and piano, also sings in Polish. Richard Lapadula plays trumpet and percussion, and Mike Petrishen handles clarinet, saxophone and fiddle. The group is completed by Peter Sylvester on bass and fiddle.

What is the band's favorite part of performing? Sobczak says it's the people who enjoy their music.

"Whether it's 50 people or 1,000 or 100,000, it's always wonderful to see the joy music brings to folks," he says. "We do private parties and festivals and even performed at the Verizon Wireless Arena and what remains the focus is the fun people have with polka."

For information contact John Sobczak at 642-4134, or go to easternsounds.com.

*"Whether it's 50 people or 1,000 or 100,000, it's always wonderful to see the joy music brings to folks ..."*

JOHN SOBCZAK  
Eastern Sound Orchestra

## Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night



GRINCH

The very essence of pop culture is something that goes beyond its origins, and becomes part of the American fabric, or lexicon.

And there are so many pop culture references around the holidays that we thought we'd take a look at the "Top 10 Holiday Viewing Classics" from movies and television.

These are the shows and films that everyone knows and loves (or at least should) from the Christmas season. Sadly, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa and other holidays just don't have the classics like Christmas does.

Someone needs to work on that. Anyway ...

10. "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" (1970): One of the Rankin/Bass animated classics (along with several others on this list). This special tells the story of Kris Kringle, and how he became Santa Claus.



POP CULTURE CLUB

Ian Clark

9. "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (1993): A Halloween/Christmas mash-up. This Tim Burton fantasy tale has a bored Jack Skellington (Pumpkin King of Hallowentown) enthralled by another holiday-themed land, Christmastown.

"Nightmare Before Christmas" is filled with lots of great characters and the always-memorable music of Danny Elfman (a staple of Burton's films), who also voices

## Teen idols

◆ **On stage:** Two Manchester students are cast members in the stage production of "Disney High School Musical 2" currently at the North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, Mass.

By MICHAEL COUSINEAU  
New Hampshire Sunday News

**MANCHESTER** — Two Central High students won't be sitting on the couch during Christmas break.

Max Clayton and Michayla Lupien will be performing on stage in "Disney High School Musical 2" at the North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, Mass. through Jan. 11.

That meant doing homework in the car on the way to six-day-a-week rehearsals and then finishing up at midnight, or later, at home.

"Once you get out in front of the audience, it all pays off," said 16-year-old Lupien, who lives in Hooksett. "It really gets your adrenaline going."

The two juniors are no strangers to one another — or the stage.

"We're best friends," Clayton said. "We actually met in seventh grade at the Palace Theatre. We sang a duet together in 'School House Rock.'"

The song: "Unpack Your Adjectives."

In September, the pair and another friend attended an open casting call for the musical. From a group of 70, 10 were chosen to perform in the stage version of the hit Disney movie. The pair will sing and dance as part of the ensemble. The first performance was last Thursday.

"It can be really dramatic at times, especially the romantic relationships between the characters," Lupien said. "It's kind of cheesy Disney. It works out all right in the end."

Clayton, 17, of Manchester, was most recently seen at Manchester's Palace Theatre performing in "The Wedding Singer." The movie version starred Adam Sandler, whom Clayton's mother, Jane, taught in the 1980s at Central, he said.

Clayton's other credits include "A Chorus Line," "Nonsense A-Men," "West Side Story," "All Shook Up," and "Cats."

Lupien's credits include "A Christmas Carol," "Crazy for You," "All Shook Up" and "A Chorus Line." She's also appeared in commercials.

Both also starred in productions of the original "High School Musical."

## If you go ...

**What:** "Disney High School Musical 2."**When:** Through Jan. 11. Shows at 2, 7:30 and 8 p.m. depending on date.**Where:** North Shore Music Theatre in Beverly, Mass.**How Much:** \$60-\$25.**Information:** (978) 232-7200; nsmt.org.

Jack.

8. "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (1964): This stop-motion special is still a hit with kids and nostalgic adults, though it doesn't hold up well in some regards. The bumble still scares some younger kids, though. Pop culture quote: "Bumbles bounce."

7. "Elf" (2003): This Will Ferrell movie became an instant classic. Ferrell is known for some memorable characters from his films and "Saturday Night Live" run, but his Buddy the elf is like nothing else he has done. Ferrell's charm is what makes this one a winner. Pop culture quote: "He's an angry elf."

6. "Miracle on 34th Street" (1947): More than 60 years after its release, this film is still regarded as one of the best Christmas stories ever told. It is more adult fare, how-

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