



## Arts Around Town: Children’s performer Miss Maggie sings to educate our next generation

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Oley’s Peggy Gerner believes that when times get tough, the way to pull through is to write a song. It works for her and her husband, Eric, penning their lyrics as faithfully as writing in a diary or keeping a blog. During the 2011 Halloween snowstorm, they were inspired to write a song about losing power for two weeks. Songwriting and performing provide endless sources of inspiration for this Berks County musical duo, with nicknames "Maggie" and "Spike," respectively. Whether Peggy performs as **Miss Maggie Sings!** or Peggy and Eric perform as **Maggie Spike**, one thing’s for sure – they enjoy the experience of sharing their songs with others in an entertaining and meaningful way.

Miss Maggie Sings!, nominated for Best Children’s Performer at the 2011 **Lehigh Valley Music Awards**, will appear Sat., Jan. 28, from 11 a.m. to noon, as part of the Peas & Q’s Family Hour at the **ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks’ Creativity Commons** in Bethlehem.



Maggie Spike, nominated for Best Americana Live and Most Entertaining Duo, will perform Fri., Jan. 27 from 8 to 11 p.m., at Creativity Commons. The duo often performs at the Listen Live open mic night held monthly and now at a new venue – the **Macungie Institute on Main Street** (Route 100) in Macungie, Lehigh Co. The next open mic night is scheduled for this Sat., Jan. 14, at 7 p.m.



As Miss Maggie, Peggy has appeared locally at **Mayfair Festival of the Arts**, **Musikfest**, **Historic Bethlehem’s Blueberry Festival**, and the **Crayola Experience** (formerly the Crayola Factory). She’s also performed at the **GoggleWorks**, the **Reading Public Museum**, and **Berks County Parks and Recreation** events, as well as schools and libraries throughout the Reading area. She combines singing, guitar, percussion, poems and stories to entertain and teach children.

The mother of two sons, ages 10 and 7, Peggy said she got her original start for performing kids’ shows about seven years ago when she began entertaining for her son’s preschool classes.

"When I bring Miss Maggie to school assemblies, I make it a show with relevant topics in a format that’s educational and fun for the kids," she said.

Peggy, who hails from Wilson, Northampton Co., was active in theater at Wilson High School. She majored in Related Arts (theater, music, movement and literature) at Kutztown University and studied children’s theater and street theater with Touchstone Theatre founder Bill George, formerly with People’s Theatre Company in Bethlehem. She also studied in New York City at Gately/Poole Conservatory (Meisner Acting Technique), The Actor’s Movement Studio, and the Herbert Berghof Studio (musical theater/cabaret with Elizabeth Hodes). She also worked as a job developer for adults with special needs.



Her 2011 "Library Summer Reading Show," with its worldly flair, reached libraries throughout Berks and Lebanon counties and preschools, summer camps and community events. She wrote and performed "Miss Maggie’s Mother Earth Show" for the 2009 **Pennsylvania Renewable Energy Festival** in Kempton, targeting topics of recycling, renewable energy, and plant and animal care. "Stay Healthy with Miss Maggie" aims at elementary-aged students on the topics of good eating, exercise and hygiene. She is currently completing her first children’s CD of the same title.

New for 2012 will be an original show Peggy developed for the **Lancaster Public Library System** and made possible through a grant from the PNC Foundation. Titled "Spend, Save and Share," her creation teaches preschool children about money management skills as it incorporates song, poetry, puppets and audience participation. She also hopes to develop a "Maggie Sings" cabaret show for adult audiences and senior centers.



As Maggie Spike, Peggy does vocals, guitar, percussion and vocal harmony, while Eric, whom she describes as "most encouraging" of her work, does vocals, guitar, banjo, penny whistle, percussion, harmonica and vocal harmony. She described their sound as "a mixed bag of folk, world music and Celtic influences." She added that a Celtic-inspired CD is in the works with music of the British Isles and more traditional songs. Eric, employed by Service Access Management in Reading, serves as producer of their CD recordings, including "Passenger Station" and "Sol Paradise." The duo has worked with such local artists as Bruce Siekmann, Kenny Garrett, Skip Azzalina, and Kevin Soffera.

"Music is date night with Eric," Peggy said. "We just have so much fun writing, recording and performing. We feel really privileged to be doing what we do."

For further info: [artsquest.org/family](http://artsquest.org/family) [missmaggiesings.com](http://missmaggiesings.com) [maggiespike.com](http://maggiespike.com)

<http://www.wfmz.com/features/Arts-Around-Town-Children-s-performer-Miss-Maggie-sings-to-educate-our-next-generation/-/121570/7881730/-/9tdfao/-/index.html>

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