



Area Natives Set For Down Home-Coming

Koenig Sisters Return To Area With Megonia

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
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When Carolyn (Koenig) Gleason and Maureen (Koenig) McFarlane step onto Magilly's stage tonight (Friday), it will be a homecoming a long time in the making.

Growing up singing throughout the area as the Koenig Sisters plus Tim, this will be the first time the duo, now part of the group Megonia with members Sam Rhode from Yankton and Kellie Nitz from the Rapid City area, will have performed in South Dakota for more than 10 years.

"My sisters and I grew up singing in the group Koenig Sisters plus Tim," Gleason said in a phone interview with the *Press and Dakotan*. "We did perform at a lot of Riverboat Days, the state fair and clubs throughout the area, all through our childhood. My sister and I both went to USD, and eventually moved to Minneapolis. We had been in our own separate groups and bands in the Minneapolis area for the last six to 10 years, then about two years ago, we formed the group Megonia."

Megonia's sound is inspired by the ballads of southern Appalachia, a subject McFarlane studied while learning the banjo in eastern Tennessee. Many of the songs they play are from the Appalachian Mountains and explore many of the traditional morality themes found in those old tunes, such as murder, adultery and stories of natural disasters.

Megonia is also adopting this style and penning songs about the prairie, as well as performing the classics.

"One song my sister and Sam wrote is called the 'School Children's Blizzard' and is based on a blizzard that hit the plains in 1888," Gleason said. "It is haunting, all the children that passed away when the blizzard hit and they were walking home from the school houses. Another, 'Ill Wind,' is also based on the South Dakota area."

The sisters formed Megonia in 2009 when asked to perform a few songs in the old-time style for a

local festival. McFarlane plays the clawhammer banjo; Gleason plays accordion and auxiliary percussion; Rhode, who grew up in Yankton and haunted Mollet Music during his formative years, learning guitar licks from Mike Hilson and Jay Gilbertson, provides bass and guitar for the group.

"We have never performed in South Dakota as Megonia; we have only been in the Minneapolis area," Gleason said. "We kind of wanted to do a family tour where we go to the major home town areas where we grew up. So we figured we would go to Yankton first because we grew up in the area and that is where Sam is from. Then we will do the Mitchell Corn Palace and then we will be in the Black Hills area. It is exciting because we will get to have friends and family who have never seen us perform before. We are excited for them to come out and join us."

Gleason said when the idea for the tour came up, they made calls to friends and family to see what could be arranged.

"We kind of just called around," she said. "My mother has been performing at the Corn Palace Days for several years and she gave us her spot, so we tried to build the week around that. Kings of Oblivion, the band we are playing with on (tonight), is friends with us and so they are letting us open for them. In the Rapid City area, we found a very cool winery that is going to let us play there in Hill City, so it is exciting."

The group hopes this is just the first of several tours through the area.

"Because we are writing songs about the area, we definitely want to get back and perform in the area in the future," Gleason said. "It has been a long time since we have played in the region. We used to be there every weekend, so it is fun to be able to say we are coming back and playing the region again."

Megonia will be playing Magilly's with Kings of Oblivion at 8 p.m. tonight. For more information about the group visit <http://tinyurl.com/megonia>.

ABOVE
 Megonia — featuring, from left, Yankton native Sam Rhode, Kellie Nitz, Carolyn (Koenig) Gleason and Maureen (Koenig) McFarlane — perform at Magilly's Lakeside tonight (Friday). Gleason and McFarlane performed in the area for years in the group the Koenig Sisters plus Tim, but are now based in the Minneapolis area. (Courtesy photo)

YCTC Heads To Class With 'Gooney Bird Greene'

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
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"Mrs. Pidgeon has just begun a unit on 'Aesop's Fables' when the classroom door opens and Gooney Bird Greene bursts into the room. The Watertower Animal Shelter is about to close due to lack of funds, she announces! What will happen to all the poor little dogs and cats? 'I know!' says Gooney Bird with her wonderful sense of adventure. 'Let's create our own fables right here in class.'"

So begins "Gooney Bird Greene & Her Fabulous Animal Parade," and the adventure that the Yankton Children's Theatre Company, thanks to a donation by the Otto Ullrich Memorial Fund, will present starting Friday, Sept. 9 at the Dakota Theatre.

"This is just a chaotic, hilarious show," said director Allison Spak. "The show focuses on the classroom project that Gooney Bird Greene — played by Bailey Franzen — and her classmates then take on to save their local animal shelter."

Spak said Mrs. Pidgeon (Molly Wermers) has each of the students choose one of "Aesop's Fables" character animals and present a skit to the classroom, all of it under the direction of Gooney. Chaos ensues from there.



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