

NEAL & LEANDRA

When college kid Neal Hagberg plunked down six bucks for a ticket to his school's production of *Godspell*, it turned into a lot more than an evening's entertainment.

Neal — then a pre-med student at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota — couldn't imagine back on that day in 1980 where it all would lead.

After the play, he approached cast member Leandra Peak and asked if she would sing with him at an upcoming concert. She did. She still does.

For decades, Neal & Leandra have captivated fans coast to coast and beyond. With their impeccably matched voices and elegant harmonies, their engaging stage presence and superlative songwriting, they are very hard to resist. Like "listening to angels," said the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; "clearly master the art of saying more with less," wrote *The Washington Post*.

Neal spent his childhood in Montevideo, Minnesota, listening to the Mamas and the Papas, Swedish hymns, and Peter, Paul and Mary, and — like legions of other youngsters — dreaming of a career in professional sports. And Leandra, whom the Twin Cities' *City Pages* crowned Best Female Vocalist (2005), grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. Her father, who had earned his college money moonlighting as a nightclub crooner, raised her on a musical diet of Perry Como with a side of barbershop quartet. As a little girl, she dreamed of being on Johnny Carson's show, not for her vocal flair, but simply because she thought Johnny would find her funny.

The two married in 1989 and began touring as a duo full time. Since releasing their first album, *Old Love*, in 1992, they have produced close to a dozen recordings — each full of beautifully crafted originals.

Recent releases include *Dancing with a Ghost*; *Angels and Fools: A Christmas Collection Volume 2*; *A Dreamer's Holiday: A Tribute to Perry Como*; and *Bridge Rail*. Neal's solo recording, *It's Not as Simple as it Seems*, features 14 songs that tackle often-difficult issues. Leandra's lullaby album, *The Honeysuckle Vine*, is perfect for listeners of any age. A new duo CD is in the works for 2011.

Neal & Leandra are recipients of the prestigious McKnight Performing Artist Fellowship (2002), in recognition of excellence in live performance. And Neal was honored with a 2010 McKnight Composers Fellowship for *It's Not As Simple As It Seems*.

On radio, they've made appearances on *The Morning Show* (Minnesota Public Radio), *Fog City Radio* (KQED-FM, San Francisco), *River City Folk*, and Boston's WUMB.

Tours have taken them to Canada's Winnipeg Folk Festival and to 45 states — from the Kerrville (Texas) Folk Festival to a tiny coffeehouse in San Luis Obispo, California, from New York's Carnegie Hall and Minnesota's famed Guthrie Theater to small-town Louisiana for a concert in a former Confederate hospital. But the road always leads them home to Minneapolis, where they live with their young daughter, Madeline.

From the start, folk legend Tom Paxton recognized that Neal & Leandra had that certain something that set them apart. "I've heard a half-dozen of their songs already that I believe will be classics," he reported. "Do yourself a favor and listen to them now." Still great advice.