

All in the family

A father-daughter music team keeps the music flowing

HOW MANY DAUGHTERS can say that they sub for their dad on Broadway? Paul and Julia Adamy are both Local 802 members and professional bass players who both continue to learn from each other. Allegro recently caught up with them to find out about what's it's like when music is all in the family.

Paul, what was it like growing up with a musical daughter, and Julia, what was it like growing up with a musical father?

Paul Adamy: It was fantastic! Julia loves all kinds of music and it was fun to introduce her to so many different artists. I got to play with her at various performances, like playing the double bass parts with her grade school orchestra because none of the kids were tall enough to play anything but violin, viola and cello. I also played in the pit band when she was Dorothy in a fifth grade production of "The Wizard of Oz." It was especially moving to accompany her singing "Somewhere Over The Rainbow."

Julia Adamy: As a kid it just seemed normal having my dad play bass. I loved going to his gigs and hearing him practice. My parents always played great music around the house. I would dance around the living room all day to Motown! There is actually a home video my dad took of me and my younger brother marching around the house with toy instruments. My dad had some sheet music laying around so I sat down and pretended to read

it with my little xylophone. Eventually I asked, "Dad, what does this really say?" He told me that it was a Jaco Pastorius tune called "TeenTown." Little did I know that I would spend hours practicing that song years later! It wasn't until I actually started playing bass that I realized how lucky I was to have a wonderful musician as my father. I think every year I grow as a musician, I appreciate my dad so much more.

Paul, tell us how you first started playing on Broadway.

Paul Adamy: By 1998, I had a lot of friends playing on Broadway. Clint de Canon recommended me to Vince Fay at "Footloose." Drew Zingg also recommended me to Frank Canino at "Smoky Joe's Cafe." I ended up learning both books simultaneously. I thought I was going to play "Smoky Joe's" first but because they were were bringing in guest artists every few weeks and the book was in a state of transition, I was put on hold. Meanwhile over at "Footloose," Vince was trying to cover his Christmas day show so I started learning that book as well and that turned out to be my very first Broadway show. Vince and Frank later became subs for me at "Mamma Mia." It's great how the musicians on Broadway take care of the people who previously gave them work.

Julia, tell us how you starting subbing for your dad in "Mamma Mia" on Broadway.



Julia Adamy: In high school I started sitting in the pit somewhat frequently. The conductor, David Holcenberg, knew I was playing bass and asked if I wanted to play the exit music one night. David was extremely encouraging and supportive. Each time I sat in the pit he'd let me play a new song. My dad would just hand me the bass, I'd play a song or two then I'd hand it back to him. My dad would go through the songs with me to make sure I had all the articulation and styling down. Learning the show was really great for that. I had to be very specific in the way I played everything.

My dad warned me about making mistakes, and how the most important thing is to just stay calm and move on if they do happen. It is live theatre after all and the unexpected happens. That is what makes it fun, challenging and exciting. He also gave me some tips on

playing the same thing over and over, and to stay focused constantly. The conductors for "Mamma Mia" have been great about allowing my dad and I to add our own fills to make the show different and fun. It has helped me choose the time and place for fills wisely, they have to fit in and become the part.

By the time I was 20, I joined Local 802 and started subbing for my dad. It was a lot of fun, especially since I had known everyone in the pit for so long. They made it very comfortable and easy. I've never had to deal with annoying people or difficult conductors, so I guess I'm lucky there.

North Texas really helped with nerves. We had auditions every semester and none of the teachers sugar-coated anything. If you sounded bad, they told you (in a productive, caring way). When I played the show for the first time, I was definitely nervous. I didn't put the bass

down once, but I knew I had to nail it no matter what.

As a follow-up, Julia, tell us how you got the "Mamma Mia" national tour. How is touring different for you from playing a Broadway show?

Julia Adamy: David Holcenberg knew I was graduating soon and recommended me for the tour. I finished school and started the tour two months later. It was nice to really be able to make the show my own. When I was subbing for my dad on Broadway I would try and sound just like him, but on tour, I felt it became my show.

Almost everyone in the band started the tour at the same time, so we really grew together, musically and personally. On the road you become family. Although it's a job, it's also a lifestyle. The entire company works together, lives together and travels together. It's hard to have a routine when you are in a different city every week.

I completely enjoyed it, but it was definitely something you have to be

prepared for. It took a little while to get used to that kind of life and it's been a little difficult adjusting to the real world again.

What are the fun things about having music in the family?

Paul Adamy: I don't take for granted how great it is to have music in the family. I grew up in a home where my parents didn't own a stereo. I independently sought out ways to bring music into my life, so as a 12-year-old, I purchased my own turntable and records with my paper route money.

Providing a home with music, instruments, and our ever-growing circle of creative musician-friends, has brought such energy and vitality to our family. I never intended to have either of my children become musicians. I just knew that exposing them to as much music as possible would expand their minds. Little did I know that Julia would pursue music professionally, but when I saw that it was coming from her genuine desire, I

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couldn't help but support her.

I usually practiced during the day when the kids were in school. I'm also fortunate to have a studio/office in my home.

When my daughter was in 11th grade, the spring musical at Nyack High School was "Seussical," a Broadway show that I had subbed on for Francisco Centeno. Julia invited the whole pit orchestra over to our house to play along with the conducting video I was given to learn the show.

There were about 15 kids in my wife's office gathered around the TV watching David Holcenberg conduct!

Julia ran these additional rehearsals with professional Broadway standards and, I have to admit, these high school kids rose to the occasion. They were really dedicated and did an amazing job with the great score by Flaherty & Ahrens.

Even though my wife never played an instrument or understands the technical language of music, she loves music. She is also one of the best supporters a musician could have. Julia and I both experience and appreciate her support strongly.

Julia Adamy: It's so nice to have something as important and meaningful as music to share with my dad. We are able to compare stories and introduce each other to new artists. Even though it doesn't happen often, it's great to play with my dad. I know I can always learn from him. We have a room in the basement that we use as the music room. My parents and brother were always very encouraging for me and my friends to jam in high school. We had people over constantly, it was a lot of fun. My brother played drums for a little while. It didn't last long, but it got us a drum set for the house!

Where do you see live music today and what hope can you give for future musicians and future audiences?

Paul Adamy: Music is still really important to people, especially to the younger generation. The mega pop stars get the most publicity but there are so many new, creative bands and musicians

out there. I think live music has a bright future but the paradigm has changed. Gone are the days of bands looking for that major label contract to launch their careers. The traditional avenues like radio to get music out there have changed. There are new ways for music to get heard and publicized like iTunes, Spotify, Twitter, Facebook, Internet radio, YouTube and Rhapsody.

Protecting live music is one of the most important jobs of Local 802. It's amazing how many times folks come up to our pit at "Mamma Mia" and are surprised to see we're down there. They think it's a recording! We have to educate them. We also need our bios in Playbill and every musician listed in the credits of every movie. I know school districts like the one in Nyack really support the arts and have a very fine music program filled with talented and dedicated teachers.

Julia Adamy: Live music has changed dramatically recently, no doubt about it. It seems that the general public is less interested in listening to real music and more interested in seeing an entertaining show (with some beats in the background). I don't know if it's because of all the constant over-saturation of technology, but attention spans have definitely become shorter. The majority doesn't appreciate creative music nearly as much. There will always be musicians listening to musicians, but that isn't enough. I hope that it changes. There are still new bands that actually have talented members. I think a lot of it starts with school. It's unbelievable that some schools don't even have a music program. Even with that, there isn't a shortage of talented musicians: there is a shortage of creative, paying gigs. I think the key is to have a balance of creative yet entertaining music. I hope to have a part in something that I'm proud of but can also reach the masses. I guess that's the goal for most musicians.

Paul Adamy's Web site is www.PaulAdamy.com; Julia's is www.JuliaAdamy.com.