

LIBRARY TOUR WITH 'LITTLE JOHNNY'

Tell it like it is, Mr. Stelmach

It doesn't take much for children's entertainer Robert Stelmach to transform into his stage persona, Max Tell.

Dave WILLIS
Now contributor

"I can just drop into it. It's like putting on different clothes, it's just faster," says the writer, singer, performer and storyteller.

"He's pretty much me. I get a little brighter when I'm Max Tell. You put on a persona and you become much more fun," Stelmach says, before quickly adding he's not an un-fun guy himself.

Stelmach has been performing as Tell since the mid-1980s, and connecting with his audience is a major upside to his job.

"I just love doing it. I really enjoy just seeing the sparkle in young people's eyes. And in the parents' eyes. I love it when they participate with me," he says. "When I get out in front of my audience and they click with me, it's such a pleasure."

The 62-year-old White Rock resident says on his website that well-crafted stories and songs have the ability to empower young people and teach us about ourselves.

A good song or good story has something to teach, he says, adding that it doesn't necessarily have to be in a moralizing fashion. "It helps young people to look (at) the world slightly different. Sometimes it's just for a giggle. And that in itself is looking at the world a little differently."

Stelmach, owner of a bachelor of fine arts degree in theatre, has had a career that's taken him around the world. He's performed in Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Seattle and Ontario and has taken part in events like the Vancouver Children's Festival and the Vancouver Storytelling Festival.

One of his recent stories, *Fieso, the Book Burro*, was a runner-up in the 2007 Union of Canadian Writers' Writing for Children Competition.

He's also released a handful of children's audiobooks. The latest, *Little Johnny Small and Other Stories*, was launched earlier this year in English and Spanish versions, in partnership with Argentinian-Canadian author Silvana Goldemberg. The stories deal with bullying, forgiveness and friendship.

On Thursday (August 7), Stelmach morphs into Max Tell again to bring his *Johnny* stories to three Delta libraries – all in a one-day, slightly whirlwind tour. At George Mackie library in North Delta, the performance starts at 10:30 a.m., at 8440 112th Street. The program is free; registration is not required.

His tour of Summer Reading Clubs at libraries in the region continues Friday, August 8 at White Rock Library (15342 Buena Vista Avenue), starting at 2 p.m.

Other events at North Delta library

Also on the calendar at George Mackie library in North Delta, a Teen Pizza and Games Night on Thursday, August 7 from 5 to 8:30 p.m. It's a free event for kid age 12 and older; to register, call 604-594-8155.

Set for Saturday, August 16 is a So You Want to Be in the Movies session with local talent agent Robert Smith, who will explain requirements of film work and give insight into the audition process. His 90-minute presentation begins at 2 p.m. The program is free and open to all ages.



Photo: Chris Kelly

White Rock's Robert Stelmach as Max Tell, rainbow-hued socks and all. "I really enjoy just seeing the sparkle in young people's eyes," says the performer.

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