

# “Chance”

## Cheryl Leah and Ed Willett

*By Helmi Strahl Harrington, Ph.D.*

Cheryl Leah and Ed Willett present an amazingly inventive repertoire in their 45-venue tour to end in Boston in Spring, 2008. Their kick-off performance at Harrington ARTS Center on November 4, 2007, was one of the most original and exciting in our concert series history. The hour-and-a-half program just flew by as Ed performed original pieces on cello in accompaniment to Cheryl’s extraordinary vocals. What a team! As if of a single mind, they create beautifully intelligent music, devise texts, and work out styles of performance delivery.

Cheryl and Ed are beloved for their elegant combination of voices and cello, and are admired for their ability to entertain in 20 seasons at Big Top Chautauqua, and its “Tent Show Radio.” They have brought together talent, background experience, and excellence of judgment. Ed’s mastery of the cello clearly is based in disciplined musicianship (Univ. of Southern California). A high caliber cellist! When his voice joins wife Cheryl’s, their expressive songs perfectly depict moods of often-surprising content. Cheryl’s wide-range voice unflinchingly picks tones without any pitch cues (showing her Jazz experience). Their linear interactions form enlightened harmonic movements of balanced consonance and dissonance. Contemporary composers take note! This is music everyone can enjoy—as absolute music and as entertainment!

This program offered serious pieces interspersed with light-hearted ones, meaningful concepts and enchanting twists in humorous texts. Who could think of a line that compares the passing of summer as quick as a possum’s kiss? There is nothing at all cliché about their work or music; neither are the standing ovations mere courtesies. These are great performers with awesome, united stage presence. Delight and artistry saturate each moment. If you missed this performance, you really missed out. You may have to travel, but make it a point to catch their next show—wherever they appear. We’re fortunate that such creative musicians are active in our region, and our culture is richer for their contributions to the human spirit.

The program:

Come By The Hills

No Mama (You Can’t Go)

Through Your Eyes

Ed in cello solo (Bach)

Lady Bugs (from “Long Grass and Lady Bugs”)

Overture from “Fields: A Cantata for the Peaceful Rain”

Minnowette (cello solo)

Brown Trout (Ed on violin held as a cello)  
Bohemian Rhapsody (by "Queen") for cello and two voices  
Decoration Day (by Warren Nelson)  
I Will Carry You  
Little Missouri (by Warren Nelson)  
My Little Diddle-E-Dee

Helmi (on accordion) joined Ed in performing:  
a French musette, an Argentinean tango, and a spirited Finnish "Cricket Dance."

You can enjoy their magnum opus "Long Grass and Lady Bugs: An Illustrated Musicbox" with large cooperating team including Sue Spencer and Helmi on accordions. Sold in our gift shop, this award winning DVD is a marvelous gift to musicians, to children, and to all who wish they were either.