

Leo & the Lark spreading their musical wings

By Rhonda Van Pelt

Michael Edmiston is a carpenter who's been remodeling homes for 10 years. Kiera Lynn is the visitor information supervisor and volunteer coordinator at the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce.

Much as they love their day jobs, their hearts truly come alive when they make music together as Leo & the Lark.

Lynn, who grew up in Colorado Springs, and Edmiston, who came here from Pennsylvania in 2015, have been performing together for four years, but formalized the band name about a year ago. It's inspired by a Brothers Grimm tale that Lynn described as a twist on "Beauty and the Beast."

Lynn plays all sorts of stringed instruments and sings while Edmiston furnishes the percussion, and they've become fixtures in Manitou venues.

"We play together so often that our shows have kind of become our practice time — especially

considering we have these songs down to such an innate muscle memory, we play together so flawlessly now," Lynn said.

Both have been studying and playing music since they were children.

Edmiston has been playing percussion since the ninth grade, when he was in school bands. He's been involved in several bands since graduating from high school.

"At first it was just a hobby, or something to do around a campfire. Eventually it grew into playing more and more until I was gigging multiple shows a week. So it kind of just happened on its own," he said.

The turning point came when he moved into a friend's basement; the friend was a longtime professional musician, and eventually Edmiston began joining him on stage.

Lynn got her first guitar when she was 12 and her first ukulele at 16. Her parents enrolled her in the Colorado Springs Children's Choir early on and

she attended the Colorado Springs Conservatory after school for years.

"Growing up at the conservatory was so rewarding, and immersed me in a life where everything I did was all music, all the time. They taught me everything from theory, to manners, to time management — and I'm still friends with many of the kids I went to school with because we were all a big musical family," she said.

Now, Lynn and Edmiston see each other as family, and they take road trips together, listening to each other's favorite musicians, on their way to gigs.

For Edmiston, the Grateful Dead tops the charts.

"My lifestyle, compassion and love for music have all been directly affected by that band. But I find inspiration in all genres and most

artists. I'm fascinated by 'weird' music and instruments," he said.

Lynn favors female singer-songwriters, including Amanda Palmer of the Dresden Dolls, Regina Spektor, Alicia Keys and Imogen Heap. Their

musical styles have influenced her while writing Leo & the Lark songs.

"More often than not the lyrics come easier, as writing has always been my strongest suit. I write a lot of poetry and much of it turns into music at some point," she said.

Right now, they're recording her songs for an album, their first full-length one, that will be called "Inveiglement." Lynn is booking gigs for a tour to support the album next year.

She also keeps busy with her duties for the Manitou Music Foundation (www.manitoumusicfoundation.org), the nonprofit she co-founded to support local musicians and music venues. But she doesn't

mind working hard for what she believes in.

"Your success all depends on how much you put into it, so the more time you spend, the better your outcomes," Lynn said.

Neither she nor Edmiston foresee



Courtesy image

Kiera Lynn and Michael Edmiston have fun together, but they're serious about their music careers.

Each October, the Pikes Peak region celebrates Arts Month as a way to elevate the visibility and importance of arts and culture in our community. The official call to action during the sixth annual Arts Month is to "have at least one new cultural experience with family or friends during the month."

This week, the final one, focuses on music. Information: PeakRadar.com/ArtsMonth.

October is
ARTS MONTH
engage

TO CONTACT LEO & THE LARK

Venues wanting to book the duo can go to www.facebook.com/leoandthelark and use the "book now" button or send a direct message. Or email leoandthelark@gmail.com.

a time that they won't want to share their music with audiences.

"My favorite part of performing is having people hang on every note or word to a song, people's faces when they get the message behind the music," Edmiston said.

Lynn said that performing music is cathartic for her, but she doesn't feel she has any choice.

"If I didn't write and play and perform, that would kill me. Performing, to me, is the logical step to soothing your soul from the ache of the universe. My hope as a musician is by participating in that catharsis, as an audience member, it may dull the ache for you, too," she said.

But no matter where they roam on their musical journey, they'll return to Manitou.

"Between the people and the actual music community, I've felt like I was home. The band of musicians who work together and help each other is something I've never found anywhere else," Edmiston said.

"I love the stitching of this community because we're tight-knit and we care about each other," Lynn said.

"Our town is weird, and we're all weird too, and all of us locals help each other out and keep each other from falling down. That's how the whole world should operate."