

Chapin uses music to bring people together



By Nate Smelle

Music lovers' from across Ontario came together at the 4 R's Music Retreat on Dickey Lake on the night of Tuesday, Aug. 12 for a special performance by The Jen Chapin Trio. The band consists of singer/songwriter Jen Chapin, her husband Stephan Crump on bass, and guitarist Jamie Fox. Travelling all the way from Brooklyn, New York to perform at the intimate lakeside venue the three accomplished musicians were grateful for the chance to bring their music to a new audience of listeners here in Canada. Owner of the 4R's Music Retreat, Johnnie Fredette, has been acting as their promoter for the trio's Ontario portion of their tour, arranging shows for them from Niagara to North Hastings. "We are privileged to have such great talent here tonight," said Fredette. "We have had a lot of amazing musicians come here to perform because they like the way it sounds. I have to thank Freymond Lumber partially for that." Fredette said the locally milled timbers he used to build the Waterhouse performing studio create nearly perfect acoustics in the space. Getting the music started on this night was Brad Culver and Richard Arthur of Fraser Creek unplugged. Missing two of their fellow bandmates, the duo performed a set list composed of some of their favourites such as Honey Bee, and Strange things happen when you are naked in Wawa. They also performed a few covers to help warm the crowd up for the main attraction. Before she took the stage Chapin sat down with Bancroft This Week to share her perspective on the world that inspires her. Often accompanying Chapin and Crump while they tour are their two boys, 7-year-old Maceo and 3-year-old Van. As a mother Chapin said it is important for her to set a good example for her children by helping to make the world a better place in any way she can. Becoming involved as a political activist at a young age through her poet/singer/songwriter parents Sandra and Harry Chapin, the award-winning storyteller/songstress said she was an activist before she was a musician. Her father penned the lyrics to hits like Cats in the Cradle, and Taxi and was instrumental in forming the group Why Hunger. An established musician and powerful force for positive change in her own right, Chapin has carried on her father's work with the organization as she continues to fight for an end to hunger and poverty. "I think that unplugging from the mass culture and industrial food systems is what we need to do," said Chapin. "Support small local artists, go hear live music, buy from local farmers at your farmers' market. Seek out things that are real and ask questions. Don't just consume whatever is packaged and marketed to you, whether it be culture or what you put in your body." The last time she was in Canada Chapin performed a benefit concert to raise funds for the not-for-profit organization Kids Right to Know to help with their campaign to have labels put on foods containing genetically modified ingredients. Chapin sees music and art as a crucial ingredient in bringing people together. While living in New York City when the attack on the World Trade Centre took place in 2001, she said her eyes were opened as to how truly important art is to the health of a community. "In those months and years after Sept. 11 I really felt how imperative it is to have art as part of the dialogue," Chapin said. "I really feel that with art, even if you are creating a fiction you're not lying. If you are trying to create something, and you are giving something to people it has an authenticity. If it's a pure pop product like dance music or party music that's pure in its own way too, because that's the goal, and its bringing people together." When it comes down to it Chapin said she does not approach writing songs with any real political agenda. "I don't really write songs with an agenda to say, ignite the movement or anything," she said. "That might be a little voice in my head, but it's not like writing an essay. Writing a song you have to be concise and you have to be evocative. From an

artist's standpoint it's a challenge to write a song about something you care about, but I love it.? The Jen Chapin Trio is back on the road again following the show on Dickey Lake with a series of shows scheduled in Nova Scotia. She is looking forward to performing, but most of all she is looking forward to spending time at the ocean with her family. For more information on the music of Jen Chapin and The Jen Chapin Trio visit www.jenchapin.com. For information on how to help create a more sustainable local food system and to bring an end to hunger visit www.whyhunger.org.