

From Cows to Curtain Calls

Angus enthusiast Cara Ayres and her Montana friend Beth Schreiber are taking their musical talents to the stage.

by *Kindra Gordon*

Have you ever dreamed of doing something different with your career path — maybe being a pilot or a motivational speaker, or who knows? But then a tiny voice of reason inside your head argues that your dream isn't practical, so you push it aside. Most of us have probably had that conversation with ourselves — maybe even more than once.

But for two Montana women, their “far-fetched” career dreams are coming true. Cara Ayres and Beth Schreiber are pursuing their dream of bringing music and laughter to others.

Musical roots

Cara grew up in the Angus breed on her parents' Pascalar Angus Ranch in Oregon.

She was active in showing cattle, served as Miss American Angus in 1991 and was vice chairman of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) in 1993.

Today, she and her husband, Tom, have their own Ayres Angus herd near Stevensville, Mont., where Tom is also manager of the Wheelbarrow Creek Ranch. They have one young daughter, Jonwyn, and Cara has continued to be involved in Angus events through the years.

But in addition to her love for cattle, Cara has also had a passion for music. Her parents, Bob and Erma Pascalar, were also musical. In their early years Bob had a band, which Erma often sang in. And, as a college freshman at Oregon State University, Cara herself started singing professionally in a band.

“I will never forget my eight years singing my favorite rock and country tunes with ‘Wild Ride’ and ‘The Nothin’ But Trouble Band,’” she says. She spent four years with each band while she completed her bachelor's degree in animal science and then earned her master's degree in ag education.

“I will always be grateful for the opportunity to sing my way through school; it paid the rent, groceries and my expenses for showing cattle in an

unconventional and hysterically fun way,” she adds.

Beth also grew up loving music. She is a native of Missoula, Mont., and tells that both her mother and grandmother were brilliant musicians and were regular performers at their local community theater. Her grandmother even had a bit part in an old Jackie Chan movie.

But both women put their musical talents in the background as they married, had families, and pursued “real” careers. Cara taught for four years at a community college before making the decision to stay at home with her daughter and assist Tom in managing their Angus operation.

Beth and her husband, Tim, have two young boys, Benjamin and Garrett. She has a degree in elementary education and was a teacher for several years before also making the decision to stay at home with her sons.

Then, in 2003, Beth and Cara say they both felt the need to explore their musical interests and find a creative outlet. So they each auditioned at their local Stevensville Playhouse. They were both cast in the production “Ruthless,” through which they met one another for the first time and became best friends.

Since then, the two have performed together in several musicals for their local community theater — and they've also brainstormed and dreamed throughout the years about becoming a performance team, but didn't quite know how to make that a reality.

A dream comes true

Then, in fall 2007, they were brought the two-woman, duet-style script “Honky Tonk Laundry” and were asked to perform it for the Stevensville Playhouse in early March 2008.

The nationally acclaimed script, which was written by Roger Bean, features two women who meet at a laundromat. Both are up to their elbows in soapsuds and cheatin' boyfriends. As the story unfolds, the two women join forces and help each other discover their own true potential — which includes one of them fulfilling her dream to become a country western singer. Songs throughout the two-hour production include the music of Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, Reba McEntire, Loretta Lynn and The Dixie Chicks.

“They are trying to pick themselves up; they are trying to better their lives,” Cara says of the two characters.

“It's really a story of friendship and empowerment, which speaks to our own story. This script helped us manifest our own dream,” Beth adds.

All nine shows were sold out to rave reviews — which not only made history in



▶ **Above:** Cara Ayres (left) and Beth Schreiber are pursuing their dream of bringing music and laughter to others by founding their own musical entertainment group named “Take Two.”

▶ **Below and right:** See Ayres and Schreiber performing in “Honky Tonk Laundry” at the Western National Angus Futurity April 26.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANDY LARSON

Get ready for Reno honky tonk

Montana duo will entertain Angus enthusiasts with musical comedy.

The Western National Angus Futurity (WNAF) scheduled for April 25-27 in Reno will include a bit of “honky tonk” drama this year. More specifically, “Honky Tonk Laundry” — a live stage production written by Roger Bean and filled with music and laughs — will be performed as an evening fundraiser for the WNAF April 26 at 7 p.m. at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino.

The nationally acclaimed script tells the story of two friends who help each other discover their own true potential. Songs throughout the two-hour performance range from music of the 1960s by Patsy Cline to modern-day hits by The Dixie Chicks.

Performing the show will be Cara Ayres and Beth Schreiber, both from Stevensville, Mont. Ayres has strong ties to the Angus breed as she grew up on an Angus operation in Oregon, was Miss American Angus in 1991, and presently owns an Angus herd with her husband.

Of the new fundraising venue for the WNAF, Ayres says she hopes the evening recreates some of the camaraderie that the Auxiliary Fun Nights of the past did.

“This will be a fun change for Reno,” she says. “It is a stage production, so it is different, and Beth and I are excited to put a punch of energy into the Western National show.”

their small community but also ignited the spark needed for Cara and Beth to found their own musical entertainment group, which they named “Take Two.”

Cara recalls that during their final performance of “Honky Tonk Laundry,” Ankony Farms President Tom Hill was in the audience and thought the show was fantastic. Rock music legend Huey Lewis — who owns a farm in the Bitterroot Valley — was in attendance as well, and after the show, his exact words were, “I loved it!”

“He let us know that we were good enough to take the show on the road,” Cara says.

With support from their husbands and parents, Cara and Beth say it was a dream come true to pursue their musical venture. “We both have kids in school now, and we both were aching to go back to work in some form,” Beth says. “Nothing brings us more joy than performing, so it was an obvious choice.”

This spring the duo will perform “Honky Tonk Laundry” in Missoula for a local fire department fundraiser; and as a fundraiser at the Western National Angus Futurity in Reno (see sidebar for more details).

They are exploring all options for their performance lineup from corporate functions and retirement parties to entertainment at production sales or Angus Foundation events, but they hope to focus most on working with nonprofits and organizations holding fundraisers.

“We decided to focus on fundraising efforts since that not only fulfills us, but important causes as well. Cara and I both feel very strongly about making a difference in this world that our children are now stepping into,” Beth says.

“A music career often comes with a stigma that it’s not a service-driven industry,” Cara adds. “So we want to use this to reach out to nonprofits and have a purpose in helping them with fundraising.”

Beth says, “When people leave the show I hope they are walking out laughing . . . I hope that we’ve brought them the gift of turning off the world for two hours and that they can simply enjoy the show. We hope our audiences have a sheerly blissful experience.”

Looking to the future, the women are also eager to stretch their own creative muscles and write some of their own scripts to perform — as well as even possibly record a CD.

“I don’t see any boundaries,” Beth says. “We are ready for this to evolve to a full-time career.”

Cara echoes those comments, saying “It would be an incredible gift if this could be sustainable.”

Last but not least, Cara says she hopes to serve as an inspiration to others who might have a dream in the back of their mind.

Feel-good music

Schreiber and Ayres have been performing together since 2003 when they met at their local Stevensville Playhouse. They have appeared in “Ruthless,” “Dear Old Butte,” and “She Loves Me.”

Since the success of “Honky Tonk Laundry” in the spring of 2008, the duo made the decision to take their show on the road, particularly with a focus on helping organizations do fundraising.

“We see this as a creative, new and innovative way to fundraise that also allows people to walk away from the event with a good feeling,” Ayres says.

Of the Honky Tonk Laundry show, Ayres and Schreiber tell that the music is fantastic and the story line is fun. The performance also includes some audience interaction.

“It pokes fun at redneck gals, but in a loving way. You fall in love with the two women and the story really speaks to rural communities,” they conclude.

Tickets are available for \$25 each by calling 916-362-2697.

“Many people know me as someone who raises cattle, but hopefully by seeing me pursue my own dream as a performer they ask themselves what they could be doing in their own lives to step out of the box and achieve their dreams.”

For more information about Take Two, e-mail taketwo@q.com. Their web site is currently being developed. In the meantime, they do send out updates about their performances via e-mails.

