

Master of the family concert

Tom Chapin aims at children and adults

By **IAN SPELLING**
SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

Music is pretty much the Chapin family business.

"My dad, Jim Chapin, was the first musician in the family," Tom Chapin says. "He's very well known by a very small number of people, but those people think he's the second coming. He wrote a book called 'Advanced Techniques in Modern Drumming' in 1948, and he's 87 years old now and still playing and teaching.

"Because he had more fun than pretty much anyone else in the world, his three sons by his first marriage — Harry, Tom and Steve — became full-time musicians, not doing jazz as he did, but our own kind of music. ...

"Now, Harry's daughter Jen is singing full time, and I have three daughters who are singing full time [as the Chapin Sisters]."

Among the many hats he's worn,

WHO: Tom Chapin.

WHAT: Kid-friendly folk and pop.

WHEN: 1 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: Riverspace Arts, 119 Main St., Nyack, N.Y.; 866-811-4111.

HOW MUCH: \$15 in advance, \$18 at the door.

WHERE TO HEAR:
members.aol.com/chapinfo/tc.

Chapin is a respected folk singer, an occasional actor, a Grammy Award-winning children's music performer and a kids book narrator. Also, like his brother Harry, who died in 1981, he's a social activist and is on the board of directors of World Hunger Year, the organization Harry helped found in 1975 to fight hunger and poverty.

Chapin released his most recent adult album, "The Turning of the Tide," last year, and his most recent kid-friendly album, "Some Assembly Required," in 2005. Right now he's on the phone from his Rockland County home to talk about his family concert Sunday at Riverspace Arts. Attendees are encouraged to bring a can of non-perishable food that will be donated to the charitable organization People to People.



Tom Chapin says it was his dad, Jim, who inspired his musical career.

"I'll have my amazing two guys, Michael Mark on bass and squeezebox, and Jon Cobert on piano and accordion," he says. "They [along with John Forster] have collaborated with me on all my kids albums, and they'll be doing vocals, too. And I'll be singing and playing guitar and banjo and autoharp and probably didgeridoo.

"We'll also involve the audience," he adds. "People will learn how to do the chorus of 'Family Tree' in sign language. There aren't a lot of shows where kids, parents and grandparents can come together and have a good time, together and individually. This is aimed at us, the adults, as much as it is the kids."

Chapin never figured he'd spend 19 years and counting as a singer of kids' music. Yet, here he is. And though he'll always perform and record adult music, he considers it vital — in this era of 8-year-olds chirping the lyrics to "My Humps" — that musicians create age-appropriate material for kids.

"The first album, 'Family Tree,' came out in 1988, when my daughters Abigail and Lily were 8 and 6," Chapin says. "It occurred to me that you could write great songs for that age. I wasn't interested in writing toddler music, because we had Raffi and people like that who were doing wonderful music for really little kids.

"But when my children got to an age where they understood story, understood humor, I realized it'd be fun to write a record that was kid-friendly and adult-safe, because we're the ones who buy these things and play them over and over. Really, it's the last time parents are buying and sharing music with their kids, because once kids get into middle school it's really about what their friends are doing, not what their parents are doing."