

Bay Area Discovery Museum: Interview with Octopretzel's Melita Doostan

- How did your music career start?

I started singing when I was really little, and was always interested in performing. I started writing music at age 15 and started playing guitar at 16. I would say my actual career started right around the time I finished college in 2000. That year I recorded my first CD, "Shalem". Since that time, I've been in various singing groups.

- Where have you traveled to perform?

I was in a children's' performance troupe for about four years called Kid Kaleidoscope. We went all over the west coast performing at festivals such as the Oregon Country Faire, the Harmony Festival and Earthdance. I was also in an all women's' vocal ensemble called Yah Elah for three years. We sang music from many traditions and cultures in a Balkan/Bulgarian style.

- What kind of music do you perform? Where does it come from?

I had my daughter, Leilah, three and a half years ago, and since that time I have been focusing more on my own folk music that I perform with my husband. (Check out my website, www.melitamusic.com, for more info about that!) Octopretzel is a relatively new entity. We formed about 8 months ago, after getting together informally a couple times to play some folk tunes for our friends and their kids. Everyone seemed to like it and started asking for more. So here we are! We play original and traditional songs with a bluegrass-y flavor, integrating puppets, movements, dance-alongs and eclectic instrumentation.

- What do children learn from your performances?

I think that kids like our music because it speaks to them at their level. All of us in the band have worked with kids and/or have kids, so we have a sense about what interests and engages them. At our shows, we keep the pace moving. There's lots of jumping and dancing, audience participation, and puppets. No child can resist a lovable camel that constantly falls asleep, and only wakes up when every kid shouts "Wake up Raise!!!!" Oh, and we usually give out pretzels at the end of the show. What could be better than that?

- What do adults learn from your performances?

Adults like our music too because we also play old favorites that everyone can sing along to and enjoy. The music is groovy and really isn't limited to just those under five. And quite frankly, I can say as a mother myself, parents are happy when they see that their child is having a great time.

- Do you have workshops or teach classes to the public?

Aside from doing these shows for kids, I teach music at several pre-schools in the East Bay. I also hold music classes for young children at my house in Berkeley. I'm also

currently working on an album of sacred and earth-conscious lullabies that will be coming out in the next couple months.