

The stories of ‘Mothers and Daughters’

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Being a mother at 15 is hard for many reasons. But that does not diminish the bond an unprepared teen mother has for her daughter.

That was the message of the song sung at a gathering last week by 17-year-old Anika Avelino, an up and coming singer in Port Townsend.

“I just imagine her fear. I don’t feel I am responsible enough to take care of myself and I can’t imagine how much responsibility I would need to assume as a mother,” Avelino said. “And all love and all the shame ... must be super heartbreaking.”

Such bonds between mothers and daughters will be explored this month as Catherine Ryan and Weimberg - Emmy-award winning filmmakers - conduct a five-week residency in Port Townsend developing a musical for the stage with the help of local residents.

Based on their ABC award-winning documentary, “The Story of Mothers and Daughters,” aired in 1997, they plan to

collaborate with local musicians, songwriters, singers, readers and critics to write and perform songs with Broadway in mind.

“It has stayed in our minds for 20 years,” Weimberg said. “These women just always sounded like song lyrics. Now, they are turning into them. If Taylor Swift wants to write one of the songs, we are open to that.”

The musical, with 35 songs, will portray the life-journey of 30 mothers and daughters, each in her own way illustrating the bond in all its profound, poignant and painful complexity.

Weimberg has scored the template for the music, but encourages participants to add and change the lyrics during the sessions.

“Other composers and lyricists will come on board,” he said. “I am the starting point right now, and my biggest job is to fire myself and get better composers and better writers. The point is to tell these stories in a truthful and powerful manner.” Weimberg said.

The process is not to create a Hallmark card story, Ryan said.

“We want songs that are true, even to the point of being painful. Because that is often how it is with mothers and daughters.”

Ryan said she is excited to work with local talent.

“When the opportunity came to come up to Port Townsend and spend a month it seemed like a perfect way to get engaged with people in the community, to develop the libretto further.”

INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

Nominated for 6 Emmys and winning 2, the filmmaking duo have also worked in the industry on big budget features such as “Return of the Jedi” and “Godfather III.”

The couple was in Port Townsend for the 2018 Port Townsend Film Festival, screening their film, “My Love Affair with the Brain: The Life and Science of Dr. Marian Diamond.”

They are developing the musical by reading lyrics and revising them with a group of 13 locals who meet informally in Port Townsend.



Emmy award winners Catherine Ryan and Gary Weimberg in rehearsal during the five week residency in Port Townsend to develop a Mother-Daughter musical.

In a quick turnaround, a public rehearsal will be held at noon on May 5 at the Rose Theatre.

FILM FELLOW PROGRAM

The Port Townsend Film Festival’s Film Fellow program, now in its fifth year, has granted residencies to filmmakers with diverse projects.

“We give filmmakers this time to do whatever they want,” said Janette Force,

Port Townsend Film Festival executive director.

“When Catherine and Gary revealed they would use the time to write a musical, I was surprised and delighted. The collected stories for ‘Mothers and Daughters’ is perfect. Based on my own relationship with my mom, I can imagine the lyrics that might come out of this.”

Weimberg and Ryan might be diving into a new

genre for them, but they remain documentarians at heart. They are videotaping the rehearsals and plan to document the entire process, creating not only a musical, but the “making of” at the same time.

Additional Port Townsend participants are still welcome, they said, information about the rehearsals are available at the Port Townsend Film Festival office 211 Taylor St., Suite 401A.