

Geneva Family Shines in Los Angeles with Music Talent

By Kim Sumrak

Charissa and Dana Nielsen have lived in Southern California for over 20 years but are proud to call Geneva home. The couple met in middle school, both worked at Charissa's family store, Karizma Clothiers, and attended Geneva High School where Charissa was the choir president and Dana was the vice president. Charissa told us, "Our memories of Geneva are so good, and we know how fortunate we are to have grown up there!" They like to reminisce about their times at Swedish Days, Festival of the Vine, and fun on the Courthouse lawn. Charissa and Dana's music endeavors in Geneva were just the beginning of two very successful music careers.

Charissa attended Belmont University and Loyola University of New Orleans, majoring in music therapy. Dana majored in jazz studies also at Loyola University, and in 2000, they married at Eagle Brook Country Club then moved to Los Angeles to fulfill Charissa's music therapy internship. After her internship, which included working with special needs children, Charissa landed a personal assistant job for three music celebrities: Colin Hay from Men at Work; Cecilia Noël, a salsa singer, and famed music producer Rick Rubin. One day, when Charissa was at Cecilia Noël's house, Cecilia got an urgent phone call from her back-up singer saying that she couldn't go on tour due to a family emergency, and Charissa got the job after singing "Amazing Grace" for her audition. Just three days later Charissa was on a plane to Mexico to tour with Cecilia's world-famous salsa band, The Wild Clams, beginning her dive into the music business. Today she works at as a session singer, vocal contractor, and music therapist. Charissa has been blessed to have worked with, and sung, on albums for Neil Young, The Smashing Pumpkins, Jamie Cullum, Chelsea Cutler, Cecilia Noël, Colin Hay and Liam Gallagher. She has sung solo or in the choir for movies such as *Spider Man: No Way Home*, *Star Trek Beyond*, *Rogue One: A Star Was Story*, *La La Land*, *The Jungle Book*, *Tomorrowland*, *Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar*, *Ice Age 5*, *Sing*, *Sing 2*, and *Jurassic World*. Additionally, she has lent her vocals to commercials for companies like Nationwide, Burger King, Infiniti, Cuties, Jell-O, Jif, Arby's, Jack in the Box and American Family Insurance.

As for Dana, his first job in LA was at Guitar Center in Hollywood where he sold recording equipment. He was asked to install specialized equipment into the homes and studios of the rich and famous, which led to clients asking for assistance recording while on tour, eventually leading to his career in mixing and producing. Since 2000 Dana has worked with Bob Dylan, The Smashing Pumpkins, Justin Timberlake, and Neil Young to name a few artists. In 2012 he was nominated for a Grammy Award for his work with Rihanna.

After 21 years of working in the music business on other people's projects, Charissa and Dana decided to put their own music out and produced a video for a song Dana had written and produced called "Millions." millionsong.com.

Charissa (aka Roxi Jet) sings vocals and Dana (aka Beni Sway) raps and plays all the instruments. Additionally, the family made a covid music video in 2020, and hopes to produce a family Christmas song each year.

Charissa and Dana have one child, Cora, who is nine and currently a 4th grader at a public school in Culver City. Cora has a lot of energy and naturally likes to sing, dance,



paint, draw, and participate in gymnastics. She is a social butterfly and thrives when she's around her friends. Cora has sung in commercials for Jif, and on TV shows like ABC's *A Very Boy Band Holiday* Disney's *Odd Bods* and on movies such as *It* and *It Chapter Two*. Cora just joined orchestra and chose the violin as her instrument of choice.

The family resides in Culver City, in Los Angeles County, and Charissa remarked how the area reminds them of their roots in Geneva with friendly people and streets lined with kids in the neighborhood. They have yearly block parties and parades, and an annual tree lighting tradition. There are several musicians on their block, and they often have music gatherings for jamming. Besides music, Dana is a surfer and likes to go to Venice with friends and Charissa is in a book club that goes all out with everything they do. The family also loves cooking and entertaining and is known for their "restaurant quality" meals.

To learn more about Charissa and Dana's musical talents, you can visit their websites: www.sessionsingerla.com www.dananielsen.com

