

[MUSIC - THE OK FACTOR, "LOVE SONG FOR LUCY"]

CATHY WURZER: Oh, this is pretty. It's called "Love Song for Lucy." it's the most recent single from Minneapolis-based band, The OK Factor. The band includes cellist Olivia Diercks and violinist Carla Colahan. They're about to kick off a tour across the Midwest alongside the Swedish folk band Jaerv. Here on *Minnesota Now*, we love to talk to musicians about their music and their musical inspirations. So producer Ellen Finn reached out to Karla and Olivia.

ELLEN FINN: Hi, Carla and Olivia.

OLIVIA DIERCKS: Hello.

KARLA COLAHAN: Hey.

ELLEN FINN: That song we just heard from you was so beautiful. Tell me more about it.

KARLA COLAHAN: Yeah. It's one of our favorites. It's "Love Song for Lucy," named after my first golden retriever.

ELLEN FINN: Oh.

KARLA COLAHAN: Yeah, she's turning five this year, so it's a big birthday for her. It was so fun to put it together with Jaerv.

ELLEN FINN: And I understand Jaerv is a Swedish folk band you work with sometimes what was it like working on that song with them?

OLIVIA DIERCKS: You know, the piece was already written, and it was actually something that we tried with at a concert. I think the first time we did it was in Decorah, Iowa. And this was a show actually right before the pandemic hit, so march of 2020. And we tried this with them, and it was just amazing to have their instruments, the flute, the guitar, the drums on there.

And so when we were putting this record together, we thought, wouldn't it be fun to have just a single and invite the guys to record. So it didn't take long. They are musical geniuses, and they all have their own recording equipment. So they actually sent stuff to us that way, and we put it together. And we're super happy.

ELLEN FINN: Wow. Yeah, it sounds totally beautiful. I have to say, I saw you both perform at the MPR booth at the state fair this year and totally loved it. My co-producer and I were commenting on how in touch you are with each other when you play. How do you stay connected when you play together?

KARLA COLAHAN: I mean, we use the same tips and tricks that a lot of other musicians use, nonverbal communication with eye contact. And you know, I'm intently watching Olivia's bow, unless we have those moments where we make eye contact with each other. But honestly, I think for us, it's also just, this is our 10th anniversary. We've been doing this for about a decade, and the more we do it, the longer we do it, the more connected we are.

ELLEN FINN: How does it feel when you perform together?

OLIVIA You know, I think to kind of piggyback off the question about connection, I think the other thing, we're good
DIERCKS: friends, and that makes all the difference as well, you know, when you're connected personally. And so I think when we play together, it feels like a good time.

You know, it feels like almost like another way of communicating with each other. And sometimes, that's preferable, honestly, to speaking with each other, because it's such a such a deep kind of innate connection that we have. And it just feels right, and exciting, and joyful. It's always a joyful experience.

ELLEN FINN: Well, with that in mind, let's listen to another one of your songs. This one's called "Share a Pint."

[MUSIC - THE OK FACTOR, "SHARE A PINT"]

That one is so fun and sweet. I understand it'll be on your upcoming 10th anniversary album. Can you tell me about creating that song and the album?

OLIVIA I wrote kind of the opening to that one, when we write together, it's really a collaborative process. And so I just
DIERCKS: happened to have that melody together, and Karla came up with the harmony line. It does feel really sweet. I just kind of see it being played in like an Irish pub or something like that.

I don't think we've said this publicly, but that's on our new album called *OKX*, the X for 10, as our 10 year anniversary. Also kind of like an airport sign to kind of designate sort of the arrival of this moment, and honestly, the departure from here to who knows where. We're just so excited to still be playing music together after 10 years.

ELLEN FINN: As you may or may not know, on this segment, we want to hear not only what you've been working on but what you've been listening to recently. You sent us a song that you've been enjoying. It's called *Fear* by the musician Ben Rector. Let's take a listen.

[MUSIC - BEN RECTOR, "FEAR"]

BEN RECTOR: (SINGING) It's been 10 years on this pavement, Now I finally caught a dream. If I'm honest, it's a terrifying thing, because I feel crazy taking pictures, hearing a 1,000 people scream. This is a lot for an Oklohoma kid like me.

ELLEN FINN: What do you like about that artist?

KARLA What don't we like about Ben Rector? He just kind of has a history with The OK Factor. In our early years, when
COLAHAN: we were doing a ton of driving, he was the one we probably played the most, you know, as we were just going from city to city or moving me from Colorado to Minnesota, or you know. Some of his earlier stuff really, really connected with us as we were traveling. And this one in particular, because we feel the connection to the lyrics about catching a dream. And it's so funny. I forgot that he says, it's been 10 years on this pavement.

OLIVIA I did too. I just heard that like that. Oh, how perfect

DIERCKS:

ELLEN FINN: Yeah.

**OLIVIA
DIERCKS:** Part of what Karla mentioned, we have wide listening ears, and Ben Richter's a singer-songwriter who uses a lot of different instrumentation. So he plays piano. He plays guitar. Sometimes, there's brass on his things. And I'd say that some of his latest records are a little more pop-influenced, maybe. And so you know, the genres that he experiments with, I would say, are wide. And so that is intriguing to us, and it definitely influences our writing for sure.

ELLEN FINN: And I of course can't let you go without talking about your tour that's coming up. I know they're kicking off a tour with the Swedish folk band Jaerv that you mentioned earlier. Let's listen to a song that you both supported them on.

[MUSIC - JAERV, "FODELSEDAGSFESTEN"]

[SINGING IN SWEDISH]

Well, pardon my Swedish. I definitely don't know the language, but that was the song "Fodelsedagsfesten" by Jaerv. What do you like about their sound?

**KARLA
COLAHAN:** Oh, man, we love everything about their sound. This one in particular, it's fun for a lot of reasons, and I think this is true of a lot of their music. There's like a little bit of drama, a little bit of theater, a little bit of storytelling to everything that they do. This particular song is about a birthday party gone wrong, but it's such like a happy tune. And the way they share it during live shows is, in my opinion, hilarious.

Like there's this gorgeous tune, and they have no idea what they're saying in Swedish, but they always share the actual story before they play the tune. And then they've got like some hand motions during the song where they're sort of explaining what's happening. And I won't give it away, so you'll have to come out to a show to get the full story.

But they just-- they're such good people, and I don't exactly know how to describe how their presence of just kindness and generosity as reflected in their music. But it's absolutely one thing we love about them. That's one of the big connection points between our two groups, is that authenticity and generosity of spirit is all just-- we wear it on our sleeves.

ELLEN FINN: Yeah. I understand that you have a long history with the band Jaerv that started in Minneapolis at the Cedar Cultural Center back in 2017. Can you tell me a little bit more about how that relationship formed?

**OLIVIA
DIERCKS:** We're honored anytime that the Cedar asks us to open and kind of support traveling acts, and Jaerv was one. And we had actually just played a festival earlier that day in Mankato. So we were like hustling to the Cedar, and made it and played our set, and briefly met Jaerv backstage and kind of got to talk with them.

But then we stayed for their set, and it's certainly, I'd say, like top five in terms of musical performances that we've experienced together as a duo, that have really kind of changed the trajectory of our career and our writing in multiple ways. So after their set, we got to talk with them a little bit. And Karla mentioned, you know, just, they're such kind human beings. And that's really reflected in their music and in their performance.

So we kept in touch, and between 2017 and 2020, shared a handful of shows in Decorah, Iowa, which is where we went to college, at Luther College, when they would come back to the States. And then Joel, who plays flute and saxophone and sings, suggested that we apply for a grant through this American-Scandinavian Foundation to come study traditional Swedish folk music.

And so we did that, and got to travel there last summer just a little over a year ago. And that was transformative, just such an amazing tour. And so we said, well, now you have to come to the States and tour with us. And so we're doing that in October, and we have a few dates near and around the cities. One of them is at the American Swedish Institute on October 7th. And we're just thrilled to be back there in that space and to share a performance with Jaerv.

ELLEN FINN: Karla and Olivia, thank you so much for sharing your music, and best of luck to you on your tour.

OLIVIA Thanks so much.

DIERCKS:

KARLA Thank you so much for having us.

COLAHAN:

CATHY That was producer Ellen Finn talking with Karla Colohan and Olivia Diercks of the classical folk duo, The OK Factor. They're kicking off a midwest tour with the band Jaerv at the American Swedish institut in Minneapolis, October 7. You can find their tour dates along with music from the upcoming 10th anniversary album at TheOKFactor.com website. I am so glad you joined me here in *Minnesota Now* today. Tune in again tomorrow at noon. You're listening to MPR News.