

## Childsplay ends long run with Somerville Theatre show

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Bob Childs and his band Childsplay have been on their Farewell Tour after publishing their seventh studio album, “The Bloom of Youth.” Most of the shows on the tour were being played in the Pacific Northwest, but their last show was in Somerville on Tuesday, Nov. 20, at the Somerville Theatre.

Childs said that’s because a lot of the band members are originally from the area, and since they “started here in New England they want to end here in New England.” Childs himself was born in New Jersey and moved around a lot as a child, but he lived mostly in Maine. He was “building furniture at the time and [he] brought his violin to get fixed,” he said. He then met Ivie Mann, who was his mentor and taught him how to make violins in 1976 at age 24.

He was an apprentice for a few years before moving to Arlington in 1986 to set up his own shop in Cambridge.

The group Childsplay has been around for 30 years, created in 1988 when its musicians had their first concert. Childs was working in Philadelphia at the time and got a call that he was invited to Washington D.C. to play a concert. He was told on the call that the group’s name was Childsplay, “because everyone was playing one of [his] violins.”

Childs said the creation of Childsplay was “serendipity,” and just seemed to fall into place at the right time – and it turned out to be a great thing.

Members create their own music and play primarily Celtic tunes – Irish, Scottish and British – and two band members are from Ireland. Though their music is composed by band members, they sometimes play traditional songs as well.

Childsplay put out its seventh and final album, “The Bloom of Youth,” on Aug. 31. The band’s first three albums had little to no singing on them and were mostly instrumental. It was not until their fourth album that they included singing on most of the songs.

Childs said *The Bloom of Youth* is a “combination of songs and beautiful musical arrangements and some fiddle.”

Karan Casey is the singer on this new album, and recently spent time on the tour with Childsplay. Casey, originally from Ireland, is a well-known voice in Irish traditional and folk music whose career has extended over 25 years. She has also released an album with a group called Solas, six solo albums, a duo album with John Doyle, and an album for children.

When asked about his favorite thing about this group over the years, Childs said it was more about the people than the music.

“The friendships,” he said. “Not only are they just great musicians, but they are incredible people.”

He said that the group of musicians is extremely creative and he enjoyed all the collaborative processes over the years.

“I will miss the friendships the most” once this farewell tour comes to an end, he said.

He said that once this tour ends in November he plans on “tossing in the towel,” and to get some relaxation out of his retirement.

When asked if he had any words of encouragement to young and inspiring musicians, he kept it simple.

“Do what you love, because this never felt like work to me,” he said.