

FYI



FRED BLOCHER | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Maurice Hayes and daughter Shanice rehearse in their East Side home. "It just makes it even better that we can do it together," she says.

## COMMENTARY

## ZOMBIES? GET REAL, MURDER IS THE ISSUE

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Zombies. They're as trendy these days as vampires and werewolves.

We've got "The Walking Dead" on TV and its new video game. Then there are movie favorites like "28 Days Later" and "Zombieland." Visit stores like Hot Topic and you're bound to find zombie T-shirts and even bikinis. And in Kansas City, we just had the eighth semiannual Zombie Walk for Hunger on First Friday. In four years the event has gathered more than 3,000 pounds of food.

But as I watched the gory, slow-moving costumed monsters take over the downtown streets last

**MUSIC** | Heading to the next round on NBC

# THEY'VE GOT TALENT

**Father-daughter duo charms KC audiences and reality TV judges.**

By BLAKE URSCH  
The Kansas City Star

**T**he couple share a seat in a booth, not touching their food, looking ahead with dreamy smiles and nodding along to the smooth music filling the restaurant bar.

*It's a wonderful world,  
I'm just walking on air.*

Other customers look up from their plates and away from their dinnertime chatter, as father and daughter Maurice and Shanice Hayes, draped in blue light, take turns singing the Frank Sinatra standard — Maurice, 62, in a black jacket and bow tie, Shanice, 18, in a white cardigan and dress.

The duo has spent the last six years performing on the streets of the Country Club Plaza, at private



Maurice and Shanice Hayes performed a soulful "You've Got a Friend" on "America's Got Talent."

events and, occasionally, in the bar of Cascone's Italian Restaurant on North Oak Trafficway.

Last month, they landed an on-air audition on NBC's "America's Got Talent" — charming judges Howard Stern, Sharon Osbourne and Howie Mandel and earning a spot in the next round with their

sentimental rendition of Carole King's "You've Got a Friend."

"When a father and daughter like you come on, you move me," Stern said. "You guys are spectacular together. I think every father in America right now is saying 'Wow. That's the kind of relationship I want with my daughter' ... This is

### WHERE TO WATCH

**On TV:** "America's Got Talent" airs at 7 p.m. Mondays and 8 p.m. Tuesdays on NBC. Maurice and Shanice Hayes will return during Las Vegas week, 8 p.m. June 25-27.

**In Kansas City:** They sing from 6 to 9:30 p.m. most Fridays and Saturdays on the Country Club Plaza — on 47th Street outside Scooter's Coffeehouse or in Penguin Court on Nichols Road. They also perform occasionally at Cascone's Italian Restaurant on North Oak Trafficway. See their schedule at [kcvocals.com](http://kcvocals.com).

**Online:** For a clip of their appearance on "America's Got Talent," go to [KansasCity.com/entertainment](http://KansasCity.com/entertainment).

what I call perfection."

In a corner of the Northland bar, Maurice snaps along as he sings, bopping and swaying to the instrumentals that come from the sound system they've brought with them. He's a crooner. His songs float

SEE TALENT | D2

# TALENT: Growing up with music

across the room, smoothly, gently.

Shanice looks focused, stern, ready to prove herself. She belts her lyrics with a startling depth. Her voice is heavy with determination.

The song is over. The couple in the booth clap. So do the men drinking at the bar.

"Thank you," Maurice says with a big grin. And the music starts up again.

Music guided the Hayeses' lives long before father and daughter started singing together.

"I've always been interested in music. Always, since I was knee-high to a grasshopper," says Maurice, sitting on the living room couch in the East Side home he shares with his wife, Beth, who books their gigs, and their children.

He points out the window to a white house next door, the one he grew up in, and talks about singing on that porch, banging on the piano and annoying an old neighbor woman.

After two combat tours on a Navy river patrol boat in Vietnam, he graduated from the U.S. Armed Forces School of Music. He taught vocal music and performed for the school, singing all over the world, and then joined the Air Force's Strategic Air Command Band.

In 1993 he came back to his

family, working as an independent music contractor when Shanice, the youngest of seven, was a baby.

"I've always had an interest in music, 'cause I saw my dad doing music all the time," says Shanice, who used to watch tapes of Maurice singing in the Air Force.

Back in the day, it was a whole family affair. When Shanice was 5, Maurice would bring her and her brothers to churches around the area, ranging from Christian to Unitarian to the Baha'i faith. The kids would sing, and Maurice would accompany them on piano.

It was Shanice's idea to perform on the Plaza when she was 12. But she didn't start with her father.

"I started out with my brother because I played violin and my brother played the saxophone. And we couldn't get along or anything," she says.

"They could *not* get along," adds Maurice later, chuckling. "You know, that's the way kids are."

Inevitably, they split up, and Shanice realized she could get more attention from singing instead of playing the violin. So she asked her dad to come help her set up and run the music. Their duet performances just started happening.

"It's something I love to do, it's something he likes to do and it just makes it even better that we can do it together,"

Shanice says.

On the Plaza, they set up outside Scooter's Coffeehouse or in Penguin Court with their sound system and lights. They put out a tip bucket, fliers, business cards and demo CDs for interested passersby.

The Plaza is where everything got started. It's where they built their reputation. It's where Shanice grew up.

She's sometimes anxious in front of crowds. But out on the Plaza, her nerves leave her alone.

"No matter where we perform, we gotta go back to the Plaza. It's like home," Maurice says.

They go to the Plaza on Fridays and Saturdays to show what they can do and to invite people to book them for weddings, picnics or family reunions. Maurice says that half of their bookings come from chance encounters there.

It wasn't always easy. Shanice remembers when kids at school would laugh at her for performing on the street, seeing her bucket full of change.

"There's a stigma attached to street musicians," Maurice says. "But Paul McCartney did it. Bon Jovi did it."

"Justin Bieber," Shanice says.

They know they can perform together for only so long. As time passes, Shanice gets more and more opportunities to sing on her own. That's OK with

Maurice.

"Stardom was never my bag," he says. "My thing was, from day one: Can I support my family? And I have done that as a musician."

Shanice has her own plans. She graduated from the Paseo Academy of Fine and Performing Arts last month and plans to go to Penn Valley Community College before transferring to the University of Missouri-Kansas City, perhaps to study medicine and music therapy. But if a career in singing works out ...

"I'm just gonna grab it," she says.

Like any father, Maurice wants his daughter to get a college degree. But what he hopes for most is for her to take away the lessons he has been teaching all these years — that music has melodies, that it's important to give back to a community as much as you take and, above all, respect yourself.

At the end of their audition on "America's Got Talent," after bringing tears to host Nick Cannon's eyes, the pair embraced backstage.

"I love ya, I love ya, I love ya. I'm so proud of ya," the father told his daughter. It's something he's probably said a lot over the years; it's what parents do. But anyone could see this wasn't just any moment. It was a memory they'll have between them for the rest of their lives.

And for now, they're walking on air.