

# LAMB CHOP AND BABY

*Shari Lewis returns with the old gang  
to entertain a new generation*

BY JANICE KENNEDY

In the venerable world of U.S. preschool television, kindly Fred Rogers is everyone's favorite neighbor, genial Captain Kangaroo is everyone's favorite showman, and the wacky *Sesame Street* gang are everyone's favorite playmates.

But the title for everyone's favorite babysitter — the one who lets you stay up late, the one who knows all the best stories and games, the one with the most highly developed sense of fun — could only go to one person: Shari Lewis.

And now she's back. The bouncy puppeteer/ventriloquist (remember Lamb Chop?) who entertained a generation of little baby boomers back in the '50s and '60s has returned to series television to delight their children.

The New York native is host of a new, 30-part series for two-to-eight-year-olds called *Lamb Chop's Play-Along*. The half-hour show airs weekdays on YTV and PBS.

Lewis has the verve and dynamism of a performer half her age. And, with only a little help from her friends in the makeup department, she also looks about half her age — which happens to be 57. Her 29-year-old daughter Mallory writes and does some puppetry for the

series. Best of all, Lewis has kept her ageless sense of fun intact.

*Lamb Chop's Play-Along* is bright, smartly-paced and filled with glorious variety — hardly surprising, coming as it does from a six-time Emmy winner who has also received prestigious Peabody, Kennedy Center, Parents' Choice and Action for Children's Television awards.

Together with a trio of real-life kids, the old gang of puppets (Charlie Horse, Hush Puppy and Lamb Chop), and puppet newcomer Baby Lamb Chop, Lewis sings, acts and teaches youngsters neat things. Viewers looking to catch her lips moving will find her ventriloquist's skills as sharp as ever.

But the fun is interactive, as Lewis is careful to point out.

"You don't gain anything by watching somebody else do something wonderful," she says.

So she encourages kids to try out the

simple crafts she teaches them on the show, to respond to the jokes and riddles she tells them. She gets them to attempt the tricks, to balance coins on their noses, to try writing in secret code. She involves them in the storytelling, the music and the dancing.

And she makes sure that a good time will be had by all.

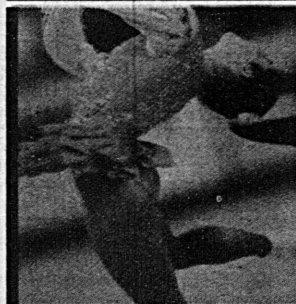
Still on YTV, watch for a new six-part weekly series starting Saturday evening. *Canada's Best*, produced by YTV to lead into the network's annual Achievement Awards spectacular in March, honors Canadian achievers in a variety of fields.

Featuring three pairs of guest hosts over the six weeks (YTV's Laurie Hibberd with CBC's Brian Williams, skating champ Brian Orser with CBC's Valerie Pringle, and actor Don Francks with his son Rainbow Sun Francks), the series looks at the makings of greatness.

Each show is a portrait of a past YTV Achievement Award winner, paired with a portrait of an outstanding celebrity Canadian in a related field. The debut episode, for example, features two pairs: Laurie Shong, the pentathlete who won the 1989 sports award, with

Olympic swimming medalist Alex Baumann; and young singer Selena Grouse with opera star Maureen Forrester.

Subsequent shows look at musical groups Bare Naked Ladies and Glass Tiger, ballerina Karen Kain, athlete Rick Hansen, actor Gordon Pinsent, artist Robert Bateman, musician Oscar Peterson and tireless organizer Betty Fox, mother of Terry. ♣



TV times

PRESENTS A VIEWERS' GUIDE

TO OLYMPIC GOLD IN ALBERTVILLE, FRANCE.

COMING NEXT WEEK