

The Minstrel Beat The team at The Folk Project (www.folkproject.org) presents concerts almost every Friday night of the year. Lots of them exhibit the blurred lines between musical genres, proving that good music is just good music! They're held at the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, 21 Normandy Heights Road, Morristown, NJ, at 8 PM. Admission: \$7 on your way in plus the balance of what you think the show was really worth on your way out. Refreshments available and a small donation is requested. Very civilized.

Hank and Frank Headline



The show at the Minstrel on Friday May 18 showcased two favorites, Henry Nerenberg and Frank Sole (Frank recently joined our NJJS board of directors and has already brought lots of fresh energy to our efforts). The duo of "Hank and Frank," both contributing guitar and vocals, have played together since 1984. They were the headliners, applying their intimate, relaxed and skillful styles to a wide range of musical offerings from Tom Lehrer to bossa nova to gentle, nuanced jazz standards, all of which flowed together seamlessly and delightfully.

Henry has the confidence and the chops to sing freely and without affect; his medley of "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and "'S Wonderful" was like a whispered conversation.

"C'est Si Bon" was swingily sung in an impish growl with asides in heavily French-accented English ("I weel buy you a Cadillac car, my leetle cabbagehead...").

"We were talking about what to play tonight and we thought, let's just play the stuff we know instead of the stuff we don't know," Frank quips. He switched to an impressive-sounding four-stringed acoustic bass guitar to lay down a rumbling foundation for a Tom Paxton environmental lament, "There Goes the Mountain," which Henry sings with a strong pure tone.

Frank takes the lead with a soaring classical solo on the "Venezuelan Waltz No. 3" by Antonio Lauro, and the duo performs Tchaikowsky's "Waltz of the Flowers" as arranged by Dave Rimelis.

"Think about the last wild party you ever went to... how ever wild it was, Henry's got you beat..." Frank's introduction to Henry's wry take on "Wasn't That a Party?"

The pair reprise a Clifford Brown tune with the Jon Hendricks lyric, "Joy Spring." I had heard them perform this number once before and again their presentation just makes me happy.

They're so inspired and inspirational the crowd won't let them go. They're brought back for an encore with a rousing "Sheik of Araby."

Off the Beaten Path: Diane Perry

Nothing epitomizes Diane Perry's unique approach to music better than her madly original rendition of "All or Nothing at All," arranged in an unlikely mash-up with the Four Lads 1953 novelty hit "Istanbul (Not Constantinople)." "I'm going to take a chance on this crazy arrangement," she warns the folksy but open-minded Minstrel audience.



The idea may sound crazy, but the music sounds exhilarating. The number opens with a piano/bass vamp on "Istanbul," as Perry begins to scat around the melody and intersperse bits of the lyric, all atop a funky Latin stop-time beat. After a bit she seamlessly segues into a vocal chorus of "All or Nothing at All." As the Latin beat continues a conga line feel emerges and, violin under chin, Perry ventures into the audience to prowling the aisles while improvising fiery licks — which tune seems irrelevant at this point, although her return to the stage brings us back to "Istanbul" to complete the musical journey.

"You could say I 'Carmen Mirandized' it," Perry says of the arrangement afterwards.

This is a second time performing at The Minstrel for Diane Perry — she opened here for Bucky Pizzarelli last year — and it's a bit of a pre-CD release party featuring tunes from her upcoming CD *Out of My Dreams*.

In addition to the title tune, with Rodgers and Hammerstein's lilting waltz transformed by a pulsing piano and drums rhythm, Perry performs bravura turns on "Stardust" and "My Romance" that highlight her soaring and passionate violin style. Classically trained, her concert hall tone is full and pure, and a joy to hear. This is not your grandpa's jazz violin.

"Lady Be Good" is a showcase for Perry's vocal skills. She opens scatting and then mimics the sound of a flute, using her violin bow as a prop, before cupping her hands to perform a growling trumpet and bass duo. The ensuing vocal on the lyric is clean and swinging. Perry's voice is full, smoky, and devoid of affectation. (She cites Carmen McRae's "conversational" style as an influence.)

The first set closes with a Perry original, "Cocilu," written for her mother, who is fond of Cuban music, and the number indeed has a traditional Cubano feel, along with slow and fast tempo shifts. Perry begins the number pizzicato and then bows a melody that put me a bit in mind of Eddie Durham's "Topsy," for a tune that's playful, mischievous and innocent all at once. Mom must be pleased.

At The Minstrel Perry was accompanied by the fine pianist Ted Brancato and bassist Andy Eulau. (Guitarist Frank Sole sat in on "Cocilu.") Brancato and Perry are prior collaborators — he appears on most of the cuts of her upcoming CD — but Eulau basically sight-read the artist's complicated book on the spot, pulling it off flawlessly like the storied studio pros of days of yore.

Diane Perry's debut CD, due to be released in October, also features some special guests, including David Amram and harmonica virtuoso Will Galison. The Minstrel preview performance on June 15 certainly leaves one eagerly awaiting the finished work.

For more information visit www.dianeperryjazz.com.



More Jazz from the Folk Folks... Jazz guitarist and singer Grover Kemble, best known for his legendary 1970s band Za Zu Zaz, returns to the Minstrel on July 6 when he will perform with the feisty and funny Naomi Sunshine, former backup singer for Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Mel Tormé, Nat King Cole and many others.