

On the Road
For Feb. 2009
Kathleen Hudson

New Year's Eve in El Jardin in San Miguel de Allende, I find myself standing in the midst of waves of light as each person holds a blazing two-foot sparkler, watching the fireworks explode overhead then rain down fire and light. I was there, and the bus ride was worth it! I also met with Tim Hazell, Renaissance artist who is working on a new chamber piece to be performed sometime in February. The Festival of Chamber Music had just finished at the end of December, and San Miguel is alive with music, art, Spanish classes, community service by the Ex-patriots, and good food, of course. I'll be returning in May for two weeks with a Schreiner class of road warriors, exploring the streets, the culture, the global issues.

I attended another intimate house concert at San Saba Cap Company featuring the music of "The Jitterbug Vipers." I have known Slim Ritchie and Francie Meaux Jeux for a long time, including an experience watching them play in El Jardin in San Miguel on November during the jazz and blues festival. Katie Holmes, recent graduate from a good music school in Waco, joined this, playing fiddle (violin?) and adding vocals. And what vocals she added! That voice took the word "sensual" to a new level, and the innocent smile of wonder only added to the music. Yes, Katie seems to sing each song as if it's her first time, as if she's surprised and pleased, as if she is deeply joyful. I loved sitting on the second row in a small room, absorbing the hot licks, the cool jazz, the compelling voice of Jitterbug Vipers. And, yes, the humor of Francie, who added comic relief when the room got thick with music. A great combination! After a scat addition by Katie, Francie, prancing back and forth on bare feet as she plays that standup bass, said, "This is so cool." That kind of enthusiasm on stage is contagious.

Go to slimritchie.com or [myspace](http://myspace.com) for samples of their music and the chance to buy a CD. I have the latest featuring Katie, one that includes well-known songs ("I'm Walkin'", "I Got It Bad," "September in the Rain") along with one quite new to me, "Lotus Blossom." They also have a CD featuring Emily Gimble on piano and vocal with Phoebe Hunt on fiddle. Hailing from Driftwood, playing the Texas Hill Country night after night, this band is part of our musician history. AND they are a permanent part of our Living History Day in September, sharing this jazz with an audience unfamiliar with this part of our Texas heritage....about 2,000 school kids. Imagine a tall guy, white beard, long hair, snazzy hat, spats on shoes, colorful shirt with suspenders and Francie, with her "snow cone" colored hair on standup bass, accompanied by a vocalist with a fiddle, playing songs from past eras under a tree on the Schreiner campus. Yep, join us Sept. 25 for more.

Sam Skeist, son of local artist Ruth Huang and poet/writer extraordinaire, spent a week in Kerrville during January before heading back to China to teach English and learn Chinese. He was finishing a course in ESL in India, living in a room close to the hotel bombed by terrorists, when he found himself immersed in that drama. The piece he wrote about that experience is excellent, and he shared it the first day of my creative writing class, Wednesday, January 14, at 6 p.m. Sam works with Bohemian Tony Galluci on

producing books and CDs of his work. Tony also films, putting his work up on UTube. WE have many performances from the coffeehouse series (including Sam last fall) on the web now, thanks to Tony. He is also a creative master who often shares his time and talent with my writing classes. Here's to local talent!

March 2 will be a great day at Schreiner. Our Texas Writers Conference will feature Guy Clark. He will be honored in Austin by the Texas Heritage Songwriters Foundation (Conni Nelson taking the lead there) on March 1, along with Rodney Crowell, at the Paramount Theatre. We will have an afternoon writing workshop as well as an open mike on March 2. Keep in touch with the Schreiner calendar or call me at 792-7409 for details. Reserve your spot for an innovative workshop led by local writers from 4-5:30 on that Wednesday. Eat at Schreiner and join us from 7-9 for our tribute to Guy Clark, a part of the foundation of great writing in Texas!

Several new CD's hit my desk. One of my favorite performers of all times, Terri Hendrix, sent me her latest, "Left Over Alls." Now Terri was once known for her colorful overalls! This collection of music is the result of some reflection on her past and with an eye and ear to the future! She is one of the few artists anywhere who can claim proudly to owning all of their own masters. I first met Terri after hearing her perform at Floore's County Store, invited her to many of my classes at Schreiner over the years, interviewed her many times for my book on the women of Texas music, showcased her at the Texas Music Coffeehouse and even produced a Literacy and Learning fundraising concert featuring her and artistic companion/producer/musical partner, Lloyd Maines. Yes, I am a fan, and her way of being with people stays authentic and intimate through every performance and through her life.

I have enjoyed the music on this CD, listening to some new songs as well as some vintage Hendrix favorites! Listening to Terri is like touring a huge home set on a luscious lawn: each room has a separate flavor even as all rooms reside in the beautiful setting of one house. Ah, Terri, you make me wax poetic!

This CD includes songs by Bob Livingston, Steve Fromholz, KS Taylor, Mike Scott, John Hadley, and of course, Terri. Produced by Lloyd Maines, this master of Texas music (and humble GREAT guy) adds guitars, pedal steel, mandolin and dobro. Other players include Texas treasures Paul Percy on percussion, Glenn Fukunaga and Rick Ramirez on bass, Bukka Allen, Adam Odor and Ponty Bone on accordion, Riley Osbourn and Pat Manske on keyboards and Mark Suitcase Stedman on harmonica. Whew...what a team on an album. Produced on Wilory Records, Terri's label, this CD is available in many places, including her website. I suggest you subscribe to "Goat Notes," and keep up with this woman!

The second CD to grace my desk is from an old friend, Lawrence Clark. WE met in an academic setting: The Southwest Pop Culture Conference in New Mexico. I quickly discovered his talent in songwriting and performing (along with the teaching) and invited him to join our Living History Day team under the songwriters' tent. He's a regular, coming over from Houston each year. Now married to Kristen, he is also branching out into new areas of music. "Amazing" is his latest CD, one that was produced by Chris Gage and contains 12 strong gospel, folk and uplifting songs! Two were once recorded by Ruthie Foster, and the arrangement Lawrence gives to "Death Came a Knockin'" and "Stayed on Freedom" open up new ways to hear these two songs that were already favorites of mine!

Always good to hear another rendition of “Amazing Grace,” and Kristen has several songs on the CD. Visit lawrencejclark.com or hiswitness.org for more information. I recommend trying out the music! And we hope to have him back, with Kristen, at our September Living History Day.

February 4 is the first coffeehouse of the semester, featuring Willie Jaye, returning with his brand of blues. I had the chance to film Willie Jaye one year as he opened for BB King in San Antonio. Expect to love the guitar, the presentation, the man. We will honor Black History Month with a presentation by Art2Heart as well. Their performance, “Journey of the Silver Chord,” will be held Feb. 21 at 2:00 p.m. at the Cailloux Auditorium in town. Expect an evening performance as the afternoon sells out. Other students will ready and perform at the open mike, starting at 7 p.m. in the Cailloux snack bar on campus.

A Hill Country treasure can be found right outside of Johnson City off Highway 290 towards Fredericksburg: **The Benini Foundation!** Not only is this sculpture garden one of a kind, but the Art Happenings celebrate living the self-expressed life by honoring writers, musicians, painters and sculptors. Go to staszsculpture.com for more information on the featured artist, Mark Stasz. I loved his talk, even noticing the poetry in his speech as well as his art. He explained his work by saying that he has “feelers” out in life, puts things in the pot to cook, freezes the mixture, then takes out a slice when he creates art. He is “drawn” to the circle, and in his sculpture, we see things like the “Sight of Sound,” (yes, that’s poetry!) as steel circles spiral through limestone.

I was surrounded by the gallery of Benini paintings as I listened to Mark Stasz describe his life and his art, showing 40 slides including titles like “Shield of Ancestry.” “Crescendo” is a fountain, and his talk was reflected in the huge Joseph Campbell book sitting on the black metal table in front of me that was covered in red and green squares (agony and ecsasy?). “Tranquility” and “Take Flight” are located on the grounds of the Benini Foundation, and we saw slides of the installation. His work “fits” the landscape, and I was thrilled with this new discovery for me! Mark is an artist in all aspects of his life, and his sculpture reveals the archetypes that exist in nature. Yep, I’m a new fan!

Dr. Ann Daley followed him, talking about her books and reading some new essays. I have been getting her wonderful e-newsletter for several years, a tool for women in the arts! She has a new book out in PDF form, allowing you to download it or read in online. The wave of the future of publishing?

Other dates for Art Happenings include March 28-29, May 30-31, Sept. 26-27 (after our Living History Day on Sept. 25 in Kerrville), and November 28-29. The Benini couple are a work of art as well! Go see them.

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