

A Stone's Throw

Keeping time with folk singer/songwriter, Cindy Novelo

Stephen Pite

Cindy Novelo has played all her life.....played music that is. From the age of six Cindy received classical music and ballet training. The whole family was musical: mom, dad, siblings. Her sister eventually became a professional dancer and actress on Broadway. But it was music which called to Cindy.

“Music speaks a universal language; its rhythms soothe the body and the soul; its elemental vibration is the birthplace of passion, compassion, unity, and community.”

Cindy says that her grandmother, made of sterner stuff, thought all the musical training was a bit frivolous, but at one point when everyone else in the family was out of work, it was Cindy and her dancer/actress sister who were the ones earning a living with their art. So much for frivolity! Where there is passion and accomplishment through the hard work of seemingly endless practice, there are rewards. But for Cindy the rewards have been far more than financial security.

“Music takes me where it will... everywhere, to the heart of healing – joy, expressing sorrow, compassion, expressing feeling of all kinds. I hope it provides the listener with an opening of the heart, a softening, forgiveness, acceptance of the self and others.”

I had the pleasure of listening to her new CD the other day and was transported. She plays, among many other genres, what has been termed, “Classical Appalachian” style. Her arrangements are mournful sounds that rise from the hollows of that region and reverberate with the melodies and traditions of both Mediaeval and Romantic Europe. The smoky peat fires of the Celts mixes with the disciplined heat of full-on symphony. I cried in the celebration of soulful sorrow that binds generations of human travail. The human condition - bold, beautiful, and sometimes painful - is what speaks to us through her music.

“Those hills are old and wise. The people who created this music lived simply, and their music reflects the depth and wisdom of the hills in which they lived. I love the simplicity and the haunting beauty of single notes, the longing in the melodies, the depth and soulfulness of the sound. It pulls on my bones.”



Though classically trained and a symphony musician herself, Cindy grew tired of the perfection requisite of the classical traditions. The anxiety of performance interfered with her connection to the heart of the sound. She sought a music that played through her, where, with eyes closed, her embodied experience of the essence of musical meditation connected her to all things, present and past; to the sparkling simplicity of human exuberance. The sound she plays chose her – a vessel of expression of the oneness of creation.

“For me, all creation that comes from the heart is sacred, holy. So if the listener, too, listens with his/her heart, or if the music somehow penetrates the heart, allowing for an opening, then yes, the music will take a listener there. I am hopeful that is the case, honored when it does. I am only an instrument”

Cindy grew up in Lawrence, but has lived in many lands. 10 years on a small island off Belize taught her that while we are of the sea, we are not the sea. We are waves in constant change, and a part of a larger, more mysterious, whole.

“I learned to love the sea, but also found myself missing, longing for the smell, the feel of black earth, the land of my origin, Kansas.

For the past 10 years, I lived in Vinland, a beautiful and mystery-laden spot in the hills of northeastern Kansas. So much beauty all around me, amazing night skies, the rising of the moon, the misty mornings. The more I live, the more I appreciate the beauty and wisdom of this Earth and the skies, Nature.

I feel this very clearly in the music that comes out of the mountains of Appalachia, the longing of the earth to be loved, the same longing that is within each of us.”

Cindy’s path has taken her across many seas, and to many lands; through heartache and sorrow, to the joy of inspiration and connection, from solitude to the love of family and friends. All along the way she has sought her spirit’s guidance and God’s love through yoga. Cindy’s engagement with yoga is a manifestation of the humbling consciousness of ultimate existence, and a place where music and spirit blend into one.

“Yoga’s goal is to unite with Spirit, to return to our essence, God within. Music helps me, helps us all, with this, too. Anything that helps us to unveil the heart, release our sadness, our fears, return to the beauty of our essences... Many paths to the One goal. So in this way, music, yoga and creativity are all paths to God. “

But it is nature, and love, and family, and the land that inspires her to write her own songs that speak softly and with compassion to the universality of the human condition.

Her time in Vinland, Kansas near Baldwin City, inspired many of her original songs; the memories and dreams and the connectedness of a sense of place and belonging.

“I write about spirit. I write about emotions. About family and relationships. And I guess the two biggest things I write about are the human condition and the land and the way the land influences us. It’s all part of one thing; music is a part of us and we are a part of music; the land is a part of us and we are a part of the land. But it is also about the greater connection. Everything is connected.

“The land is what gives us life; the earth supports us and I feel a kind of responsibility for it. And I think we all should be feeling that, but I do not think we all do, and that makes me sad.”

Cindy is currently recovering from cancer and has wondered “Why me” from time to time, before realizing the disease was not attacking the real “me” within her; another lesson, like the one she learned from playing in symphonies, that ego is what is to be lost in order to connect to the source of her sound.

“We all have to go into the darkness at different times in our lives. We don’t like it there necessarily; we are not in control; we don’t know what is going on. But that’s the time when we are truly transformed. Everything comes from nothingness and the night is like that. I find the night very inspiring; and sometimes scary.”

Cindy writes her own folk tunes as well as arranging traditional ones and accompanying other artists. While her guitar, named “Lotus Blossom”, viola, “Harmony,” and fiddle, “Melody”, are played both solo and in ensemble, accompanying other musicians. Cindy mostly uses Harmony. Her method of accompaniment is basically to listen and feel the music, another reason why she prefers the organic freedom of folk to the disciplined perfection of symphony.

She prepares, and prepares hard, for her performances. Her technique is flawless and her dedication to the intricacies of her instruments and their traditions she honors, but this work is the path to some other realm, the colors and sounds of which she shares unselfishly through her art.

Cindy’s website is www.cindynovelo.com and you can go there for more information and to order this truly transformative CD, *Stone’s Throw*, named as one of folk dj Bob McWilliam’s Best of 2009! You can also find her CD on www.cdbaby.com.



www.blueskygreeneearthmag.com

