

ARTS & LEISURE

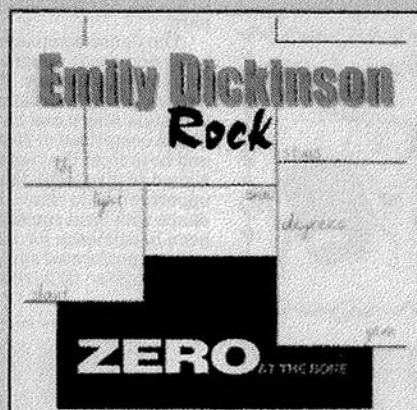
A certain slant — of song



NANETTE PERROTTE

“With the dance, my singing became more expressive. Singing grew into my whole body.”

—Nanette Perrotte



BY JANE EKLUND
Monadnock Ledger Staff

You might say Nanette Perrotte's life is a kind of musical collage. The Greenfield resident divides her time among such pursuits as songwriting, teaching voice lessons privately and at the Boston Conservatory of Music, performing with her jazz combo, leading classes that combine voice and yoga and producing a CD of music based on the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

Local folks will have a chance to sample some of Perrotte's work Saturday, when the Nanette Perrotte Combo plays at Harlow's Pub and Café in Peterborough. With Perrotte on vocals, Aaron Jensen on Piano, Keith Kirkpatrick on upright bass and Colby Kuzontkoski on drums, the group performs what she calls "very gentle, melodic jazz."

Two of the musicians — Jensen and Colby, are classically trained. Jensen has been playing jazz piano for about four years, says Perrotte; Kuzontkoski approaches drumming in a very melodic way. Kirkpatrick comes from a rock background. "He supplies a really fundamental foundation for everything that goes on top" of the bass, she says.

The combo performs standards by jazz favorites like Lawrence and Hart, Johnny Mercer, Sarah Vaughn and Billie Holliday, as well as original material. Sit and listen, Perrotte says, have a drink, talk with friends, or get up and dance. The combo provides a "soft atmosphere."

"They love playing at Harlow's," Perrotte says of the band members, who hail from the Boston area. Perrotte was based in Cambridge, also, until a couple of years ago when she and her partner, Sebastian Lockwood, went searching for a house in more rural environs.

They found one in Greenfield, and settled happily into the Monadnock region. "Love the space, love the people, love the culture," Perrotte says of this area. "It's very vibrant."

A student of voice since the age of 12, she's been in and out of numerous bands since her teens. She got her first lead singer gig at 17, with a band called G.I.R.L. (Get It Real Loud).

She also studied dance and ballet for years. "With the dance, my singing became more expressive," she says. "Singing grew into my whole body."

Hence her hybrid music/movement venture, Voiceyoga, which combines singing and stretching — stretching the body and the vocal chords. "When I started doing yoga it was wonderful, but I'd come out of a yoga class just dying to sing something," she says.

People in Perrotte's Voiceyoga classes, which she teaches at the Mariposa Museum in Peterborough, don't have to wait to leave class to sing. Voiceyoga brings two new dimensions to yoga, she notes. It adds vocalization to the mix and provides an auditory picture of what's going on

- **Who:** Nanette Perrotte Combo
- **When:** Saturday, Jan. 17, 10 p.m.
- **Where:** Harlow's, Peterborough
- **Cost:** \$7
- **Information:** 924-6365

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with your breathing.

It's not necessary to be experienced in either yoga or singing to take part, she says. The yoga is gentle, and the vocalization is geared to anyone who wants to try out his or her voice.

The Emily Dickinson project is another hybrid. Perrotte and Lockwood, a storyteller who trains teachers on incorporating arts into their lessons, recently collaborated on a CD, "Zero at the Bone — Emily Dickinson Rock," and are working on a teacher's guide to go with the music.

For the CD, Perrotte composed songs whose lyrics are taken from the 19th-century poet's work. "Her words and her phrasing work so well with pop melodies," she says.

The project took root about four years ago, when Perrotte was playing piano and Lockwood began reciting a Dickinson poem. "Immediately, her words jumped out at me," she says.

The goal is bring attention to Dickinson's work, and to help illuminate her text. Along with another band, the Emily Dickinson Rocks band, Perrotte has performed the music at high schools and colleges in Massachusetts.

On the CD, Dickinson is placed in historical perspective via narrations by Lockwood that alternate with the songs.

The recording is on sale at Perrotte's website, www.Nanettevoice.com.

Perrotte's future projects include Songsters, a group for children in grades two through seven that she'll lead with Eve Kodiak of Temple. A singing group that will incorporate Voiceyoga, vocal techniques, Brain Gym, and songs ranging from rock to pop to country to show tunes, the classes will be held Monday afternoons at the Mariposa Museum.

She's also putting together, with the Nanette Perrotte Combo, a cabaret show based on the music of Johnny Mercer, whom she calls a composer who approached writing from the point of view of a singer. "It's a real comfortable style to sing in," says Perrotte.

The combo will take the stage at Harlow's Saturday at 10 p.m. Admission is \$7.