

Local art from the soul—Gypsy Soul

BY HALEY MAY

Cilette Swann may not be a “trumpeter,” but she is an accomplished singer. Ever since her first-grade teacher told her she could be a professional singer, she was inspired (though unsure of what “professional” meant). Now she marches to the beat of her own drum: her heart.

“I feel like you have to follow your heart and your passion, and the money will come,” she says, “even if it means having a part-time or a full-time job. It is challenging and there are peaks and valleys.” But if you have a passion for art, she says, you have a life unlined if you don’t follow that passion.

She was exposed to music from an early age growing up in Vancouver, Canada. Her South African parents were semiprofessional singers and there was always music in the house, from big band to jazz standards. She remembers the voices of Judy Garland, Billie Holiday and Nat King Cole, and songs like “Love Me Tender.”

Several artists strike a chord with her today: Aretha Franklin (the “Queen of Soul”), Otis Redding, U2, Bonnie Raitt, Janice Joplin, Heart and Ray Charles. She describes her and her husband’s band, Gypsy Soul, as Americana with roots of rock ‘n’ roll, soul, jazz, blues and country. While she sings, her husband Roman Morykit plays acoustic guitar, fretless bass and Dobro guitar, among other instruments. “There is no etched path,” she says. “You must be a pioneer and cultivate your talent. Find the right audience.”

Cilette met Roman in Scotland while in a band with his brother. They lived in France for three or four years before moving to Los Angeles. Now they make a living touring as a couple half the year. On one journey, they traveled through the Rogue

Valley and fell in love with the people and the pure beauty of the seasons. They have lived in Jacksonville since 2000.

In 2010 they headlined a t B r i t t Festivals, and last summer they opened for the Doobie

Brothers. In the summer they might play at a winery such as Red Lily, a favorite. Their biggest event of the year is a benefit concert for WinterSpring, a local bereavement center that helped Cilette cope at the time of her father’s passing. The concert will be in Ashland at the Unitarian Church on December 20 and 21. On the first night, the duo will play Christmas music and some originals. The second night will include the full band. Both shows start at 7:30 pm.

They have produced 10 albums, the latest of which is *The World is My Country*. Cilette believes that it speaks to the “gypsy soul” way of being in the world: your heart is everywhere. Recently, they won Best Cover in the Independent Music Awards for “Angel from Montgomery,” written by John Prine.

A ticket to the benefit concert or a CD would make a heartfelt, local Christmas gift. Visit their website to purchase music at gypsypsoul.com. Gypsy



Top photo: Cilette Swann and Roman Morykit of Gypsy Soul. Bottom photo: Custom-designed by Cilette, this antiqued lock pendant with CD cover art and poem on the reverse side is made with fine silver with resin and a Czech crystal bird.

She describes her work as “professional, heirloom-quality, recycled and ecostyle.”

Her interest began when she wanted to incorporate lyrics into jewelry using fine silver. Two to three years ago, a master in precious metal clay gave a certification course in Arizona, and she pounced on the opportunity. She uses a precious metal clay (99% silver, 1% binder) made from recycled computer components from Mitsubishi in Japan. The metal pieces are extracted and ground into a fine powder.

Making a piece is a two-part process, taking place before and after firing. First, the clay is rolled out and cut into shapes. While it is wet, she works with ceramics tools. Then the binder is burned off, turning the piece white. Cilette then sands the dried, fired piece into a solid piece of silver and switches to silversmithing tools.

She makes the silver pieces and takes them with her on the road. At her leisure, she puts the components together. “It’s a great time for quiet. Solitude. My art is a personal experience,” she says, “a beautiful experiment.” She might bring along a pendant leaf, some chains, a pearl or piece of amethyst to work with. Each piece is unique and would make an excellent gift while supporting a local artist. Her necklaces range from \$150 to \$280. She also does beautiful custom work for around \$300 (she can incorporate a piece of wedding lace, a picture or a tuft of hair into the piece, or a simple word or phrase). Earrings are typically \$45 to \$65. She also makes some necklaces for men. Her finished work can be seen on pintrest.com by entering “Espiritu Fine Silver” in the search bar.

From heartfelt music to refined, unique jewelry, Cilette Swann is truly a local treasure and an inspiration for artists old and young.

If you have questions, email Cilette at cilette@gypsypsoul.com.

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